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STORIES

OF

NEW ENGLAND LIFE;

OR

LEAVES FROM THE TREE IGDRASYL.

BY

MARTHA RUSSELL.

I like, too, that representation they [the old Norsemen] have of the tree Igdrasyl. All life is figured by them as a tree. Igdrasyl, the Ash-tree of existence, has its roots deep down in the kingdoms of Hela or Death; its trunk reaches up heaven-high, — spreads its boughs over the whole universe: it is the tree of Existence. Is not every leaf of it a biography — every fibre there an act or word? — CARLYLE.

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CONTENTS.

THE DIARY,	5
LOVE'S LABOR NOT LOST,	69
A TALE OF THE COLONY TIMES,	87
UNCLE JOHN'S VISIT,	115
AN INCIDENT ON THE SEA-SHORE,	133
DEATH BY THE WAY-SIDE,	148
LITTLE BESSIE,	158

SKETCHES OF OUR VILLAGE.

I. THE STRIFE,	173
II. OUR SCHOOL-MISTRESS,	191
III. A SABBATH OF 1776,	201
IV. THE FIRST GRAVE,	207
V. MARY GRAYSON,	218
VI. THE MILLER,	230
VII. AN HOUR ON THE CROSSING POLE,	257
VIII. THE ALMSHOUSE BOY,	269
IX. MELINDA DUTTON,	294
X. THE MAIDEN OF THE FOUNTAIN,	313
XI. THE OLD MAPLE,	322
XII. ILLIAN LOVIS,	344



THE DIARY.

H——, Nov. 9, 1851.

No, not that Album, loaded with guilt like an Eastern slave, even though it be "precisely like the one on Lady Blessington's table," as the giver, Mr. H——, assures me ; but this one, in plain black, with only the design of the serpent and the dove upon the back. It is "plain and substantial," as old Mrs. A—— was pleased to say of myself ; and when Harold T—— gave it me, pointing to the design, he bade me heed the symbol well, saying, in that calm, grave way of his, that I lacked both wisdom and gentleness. "My master," I should hardly have borne *that* from any one else. But perhaps he was right — right, also, when he said that a "woman cannot exist without a confidant." I denied it then, and resented it as a libel ; but, now, after a four weeks' sojourn with these relatives, with whom it seems impossible to establish anything like relations of confidence, I begin to feel its truth, else I should not be blotting the blank leaves of his gift.

N. B. I will never own as much to him !

I think I will dedicate the book to Vacuna, the goddess of the idle ; doubtless many of my self-constituted advisers would think it very appropriate. Not that I admit that I have any more of an inherent proclivity to what, in their eyes, constitutes the "sum of all moral evil"—idleness—than many others ; but I am, unfortunately, always doing those things which I ought not to do, and in a way in which they ought not to be done ; and, as Aunt Mirick said, when I saw no impropriety in carrying from Stewart's to her house a

small parcel, containing a few yards of silk, "there is no hope for me!"

I know I am neither pretty nor graceful, but I never have such a saying consciousness of the fact, as when with my mother's relatives. I wonder how much such remarks, uttered in a tone of cold, critical commiseration, as, "Elizabeth is so overgrown, so *gawky* — Elizabeth is so odd; she has no taste in dress; her head is so large; and then, her feet! — she has not the Sewal look at all, poor child; all Lytton!" etc. (my father's alliance being the one "blot in the escutcheon"), have had to do with my awkwardness? They are not particularly calculated to remedy the defect, I fancy.

Once I felt all this keenly, but I am getting bravely over it. My head and my feet are as God made them; as for taste in dress, let them remember that I have had no means of gratifying it, before they deny me its possession; and, as to lacking the "Sewal air," the slightest childish memory that I cherish of my noble father is more to me than "the blood of all the Sewals!"

There! There goes the dinner-bell! My fingers are inky, my collar the sixteenth part of an inch awry; if I do not stay to right it, aunt will be sure to perceive it; if I do, I shall be the sixteenth part of a minute too late at the table, and uncle will look like an iceberg — between them both the room will be like Spitzbergen. Elizabeth will be uneasy and *distracted* for a few moments, then eat her dinner with the self-possession of queen Vashti, of old.

Nov. 10th. — "A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in pictures of silver," we are told; but who has not felt that a word fitly withheld is not less precious?

Had I remembered this yesterday, I should have refrained from shocking uncle and aunt with my heresies, and saved myself a long lecture on "womanly proprieties," and "woman's sphere," this morning.

Though some moments too late, I was happily disappointed

on entering the dining-room, for uncle was too busily occupied in talking with an old gentleman to notice my tardiness, though the exquisite French time-piece on the mantel stared him straight in the face. Mr. H——, aunt's nephew, had dropped in to dinner.

Query.—What brings him here so often of late? An increasing appreciation of his aunt's *cuisinière*, or the laudable desire to keep himself in practice, by playing off his European fascinations on a country teacher?

He certainly is handsome; and as aunt and he sat there, both so carefully dressed, so seemingly oblivious of the fact that rents and dust, lint and wrinkles, missing buttons and hooks-and-eyes, are a part of the evils consequent upon "Adam's fall," it would have been an inexpressible relief to me to have seen a speck of dust on either of them;—ay, to have proved their affinity for "dust and ashes," like other mortals, I would have been willing to encounter a slight si-rocco, or that cloud which Christian saw at the house of the Interpreter, even at the expense of my new *marron* merino, in which I fancied I was looking remarkably well.

H—— greeted me with his blandest smile, and uncle introduced "my niece" to his guest, the Rev. Dr. Smith. Uncle's manner of introducing me as "my niece,"—a title which he evidently considers sufficiently distinctive for any reasonable young lady,—causes some mistakes; for his guests invariably address me as Miss Sewal. This old gentleman did the same, and when I set him right, he said:

"Ah! ay, yes; the daughter of your sister Elizabeth, Mr. Sewal. I remember your mother, my child, when she was scarce as old as yourself. She married, let me see—a—"

"An editor," I said.

"Ah, yes, I think I met him once or twice during the sitting of the Association in this city, some—well—some twenty-five years ago. How time does fly! He is well, I hope."

"I trust so," I said, my eyes filling with tears. But before I could gather courage to go on uncle had answered for me :

"Mr. Lytton is dead, sir."

"Indeed!" said the old man, in a tone of concern. "Pardon me, my dear young lady, I might have heard it, but we old folks forget. But your mother, — is she still in the city?"

"No, sir," said I calmly, for uncle's cold tones had recalled me to myself; "my father's health failed soon after his marriage, and my mother accompanied him to his native village, where he died when I was five years old. Mother and I have continued to live at the old place, with the exception of a short residence at G—— two years ago."

"And it seems but a few months since your mother was here, a girl," said the old man, looking kindly at me. "But you are not like her, child, unless it be about the mouth."

"My niece is all Lytton, as I tell her," said my uncle, as we seated ourselves at the table.

So this old man had known my mother before trials, and poverty, and sorrow, had changed her, and I determined to make him my friend, if possible, and see if I could not get from him some better conception of what she was like in her youth, than I had obtained from her own family, — something beside descriptions of her beauty, coupled with ill-concealed regrets that she should have "thrown herself away" upon a poor editor, who was "only a farmer's son."

I am sorry to say that I was more occupied with these thoughts than with the doctor's "grace," which was scarcely ended, when aunt, reaching forward to adjust the fall of my *berthe*, whispered :

"That dress of yours is far too large, dear; it wrinkles quite badly under the arm; and your braids on the left side are slipping down. Order is Heaven's first law, you know."

Dear Vacuna, I had met aunt's chambermaid's little toddling nephew in the passage, as I came down, and, oblivious of hair-pins and braids, had stopped to toss him "up to the moon." But I did not tell aunt this,—I had too much regard for myself and "bubby Lee,"—I merely said, as I coolly cut my chicken :

"Just so, aunt; but, as we happen to be still on earth, I hold it to be wiser to comply with earth's laws; perhaps, in this way, we shall, in time, come to understand and fulfil those of a higher sphere."

Aunt looked a little confused, as I have noticed she not unfrequently does, at my remarks; and the old doctor, interrupting himself in some remark, asked :

"What was that you were saying about a higher sphere?—a favorite phrase with the young people of the present day, Mr. Sewal."

"I was merely saying that whatever may be the laws of a higher sphere, full play for the lungs is very essential here."

H—— laughed, and the old man, after a bland, "Very true; I am glad you understand something of the wonderful mechanism of the human frame," turned to dissecting Dr. Bushnell and his heresies, and, assisted by uncle and aunt, succeeded pretty thoroughly. I ventured, once or twice, to put in a sort of disclaimer, in the shape of a question, and H—— gallantly seconded me; but we were calmly put down by a gentle hint that the carnal mind could not judge upon such matters; and I sat and wondered if the human mind had really so changed since the poor and ignorant, the publican and sinner, had gladly accepted the truth, as it fell from the lips of Jesus by the blue waters of the seas of Palestine.

Then they went into the condition of the world in general, and I grew quite sad at hearing how fast all Christendom was retrograding into chaos and old night; and yet, a few moments before, in his "grace before meat," that kind old

man had fervently thanked God for all the "manifold blessings which of his own good will and pleasure he had showered upon us; but, most of all, that he had given us our being in this land of Gospel light and Gospel privileges." It is strange how much acceptance I find in the world, and how little intelligent belief. These people were sincere, and would have thought one mad who questioned their orthodoxy; yet, if I took them at their word, they were practical atheists, denying the power of truth to regenerate the world.

Uncle is a born conservative, "dyed in the wool," with a perfect horror of all restless, vulgar innovators, who threaten to disturb anything, from the tie of his white cravat to the foundations of a state. He would ignore time himself, if possible. But with Dr. Smith it is different. One can readily perceive how his conservatism is but the natural growth of that innate principle which is developed by years and success in life, aided not a little by an unquestioning adherence to certain theological notions, which have, spider-like, spun their web so completely over his heart, that he has almost forgotten the warm, gushing, sympathetic throbs of its youth, or remembers them only with a pitying smile, as youthful enthusiasms. Enthusiasm! Would that we could "be true to the dreams of our youth!" Would that we could take them with us, as blessed realities, down the shady slopes of life! Then old age would not be so meagre and barren.

So I mused, until the exclamation, "It is astonishing!" which usually forms the affix and suffix to all uncle's remarks on religion and morals, roused me. "It is really astonishing how sensible people, Christian people, can be so blind. I do not blame the south. Were they to come here, sir, and make such demands on us, we should see the impropriety, the absurdity, at once. But that such men as Messrs. C—— and G—— can be so led away, is incredible."

"All the result of narrow, sectional views, and a restless desire to forestall the workings of Providence," blandly answered the old doctor.

They had actually begun "to agitate," those two staid pillars of conservatism, and I opened my ears, for I knew that among my many unknown heresies which I had thought best to leave to the unfolding hand of time, my "abolitionism," in their eyes, would be the rankest. I thought of the days in G——, when, from every lesson and every object, "my master" (I like the old, sportive title best) was wont to deduce arguments in favor of liberty and progress; and how, in the spirit of opposition, I sought every argument on the opposite side, until obliged to yield. Those were hot battles! He would never yield an inch to the sex, — never condescend to say I might possibly be right; but, on the other hand, he treated me as an equal, capable of thinking for myself, not as a pet or puppet. I did not fully appreciate this, then; but now, ay, I see it is necessary to get at a distance from some people, as well as pictures, to see them truly. I wonder, if we were to meet again, if we should resume the war; I wonder — but enough of this. What I would say is this, that T——'s lessons had fully qualified me to understand the subject, and I asked inquiringly, and, I must confess, rather mischievously:

"But does not God make use of human instruments to carry out his plans, sir?"

"Certainly, my child; but not, I fear, of such incendiaries as our modern reformers, — men who have cast off all authority, save that of their blinded, seared consciences, nor of their ignorant, fanatical followers. Poor tools these, to do the work of the Lord!"

Ah, if the appointed teachers refuse to lead the people over Jordan into the promised land, shall they grumble if the office pass from the tribe of Levi, and hands consecrated only by an earnest love for humanity take up the sacred ark of

truth? Thus I thought, but I did not say it; only suggested that he might possibly misunderstand these men. Moreover, they were but a small portion of the supporters of the anti-slavery cause.

Uncle gave me a look that seemed to say that women were to be seen, not heard, and took up the conversation just where it had stood before my interference.

"Quite right, doctor; but something must be done to put down these elements of disorganization, so rife among us. The church and the ministry are our only hope; and, I am sorry to say, these are becoming infected. Why, Messrs M—— and S—— have left our church, Dr. H——'s church, because they are too righteous to commune with slaveholders!"

"I heard it with sorrow, Mr. Sewal; but while we deplore their errors, we must not forget that they are brethren,—sincere, no doubt, but victims of a restless spirit of change and the pride of human reason. Let the mind once get loose from sound, orthodox moorings, and there is no telling where it will go; it is a melancholy fact. If these men were guided less by what they term reason, and more by a spirit of humility and prayer, they would be led to see how even human bondage may be reconciled with the law of love, and conduce to the salvation of this poor benighted race."

All the while, during this speech, I had felt what aunt calls the "Lytton spirit" rising within me, and before the old gentleman ceased it had risen to my lips. But I mastered it, and said, quietly, "Pardon me, sir. A few moments since you were kind enough to explain to me why such men as G—— and S—— cannot be instruments of Providence, and yet, if I apprehend you aright now, we are to view the miscreants employed in the slave trade as so many missionaries engaged in the conversion of souls."

Uncle arched his eyebrows to a point, in surprise and horror, but the good old doctor only smiled benevolently as he

said, "What an absurd conclusion, my dear Miss Lytton; but a fair specimen of womanly logic. By no means; I would be the last to justify evil; but there are some things which we do not understand, — some things permitted to us, as to the ancient Hebrews, perhaps, on account of the hardness of our hearts. But *this* we do know: that God permits these, doubtless for some wise end; that, though he moves in a mysterious way, he can and doth overrule them all for his own glory and the salvation of man. We must not attempt to pry into the secret counsels of the Almighty."

I disclaimed any such intention, seeing that a dozen lives would not suffice to comprehend the revelations He had given us, through inspiration and nature; but, as this was a subject connected with the degradation or elevation of man, I thought it might be discussed in all its bearings without once being guilty of that sin. "But," I went on, "I do not feel convinced that my inference was incorrect. These men must either be doing right or wrong, serving God or the devil, carrying out his plans or acting in direct violation of that law which we are told is the holiest of all; and, hypocritical, wicked, selfish as they are, I do not believe one of them *dare* make to his own conscience the excuse that he is serving his Maker. They know it is wrong and unutterably selfish; but, as long as the wise, and learned, and pious, abet them in their practice, they will continue to follow it. But, that God sanctions such things" [uncle gave me a look, — why, such a one as Balaam might have given his ass, — but my spirit was up and I kept on]; "that the infinite, all-wise Creator cannot carry out his plans without such agencies; that the unspeakable horrors of the slave-ship and the internal traffic are a part of the 'divine economy;' that millions of human beings must perish by the hands of their civilized brethren before a remnant can be saved, is what I will not, cannot believe. The intellect and heart revolt at it. I would sooner be a pagan than accept such a God as that!"

Had a Paixhan shot fallen in our midst, it could not have excited greater consternation and horror than my poor words. Uncle, with his silver fork arrested midway between his mouth and the table, looked as if the powers of speech, and what he prizes quite as highly, mastication, had deserted him forever; aunt set down her tumbler, and crossed her hands with an indescribable air, as if she saw, behind my abolitionism, bloomerism, woman's-rightsism, fourierism, sedition, arson and murder; H—— forgot his usual *retenue*, and sat pouring the gravy unconsciously over his plate, while the old doctor, with a despondent shake of the head, and with a tone, in which grave reproof struggled with real kindness, replied,

"Very likely, for 'the carnal heart is at enmity' with God; and, my young friend, if we take your words as a criterion, I fear we shall find you look at this subject with anything but an eye of humble, trusting faith. You are tinctured with the besetting sin of the age, the pride of human reason, that blind guide which leads so many astray. It is a poor prop, my child, — a poor prop, as you will find sooner or later. Not until you are willing to cast it aside and look at this great subject with an humble, unquestioning spirit, will the wisdom of the overruling hand be made apparent to you. Not to the carnally-minded, to the proud of heart, are these things made known, but to babes and sucklings."

Old age! old age! White hairs and furrowed brows! O, what a power ye have to move this self-willed heart of mine! As I looked up in his face, and met the calm but faded blue eyes bent on me half in sorrow, half in surprise, and thought how, in early youth, the foundations of his faith had been laid in sincerity and prayer; how it had grown with his growth, and strengthened with his strength, until it enclosed him, as within a consecrated temple, whose pillars were intertwined with dear heart-memories, hopes that lived now, only in the light of faith, sorrows that had grown into hopes; I felt how

worthy of all respect is every form or creed that has typified truth to the human soul, and, stretching forth my hand to the old man, was about to try to translate something of this feeling into words, when uncle's jaws collapsed, and he interrupted me, in his coldest, most frigid tones :

"Elizabeth — Miss Lytton — I *am* astonished, perfectly astonished, to hear such sentiments advanced by a woman, and a relative of mine ! Good heavens ! what *are* we coming to ? Let me tell you, that the ladies of your mother's family found ample room for their talents in the sphere which God assigned them, domestic life. They were early taught that woman's province is to obey, not reason."

The tone roused my antagonism at once, and I said, coldly,

"Then, I am very sorry for them, uncle ; for, wide as that sphere is, ignorant and narrow-minded men can narrow it down until it becomes little better than slavery. Besides, as God has actually endowed them with reason, they must find it extremely difficult, at times, to obey both God and man."

"I see no such difficulty," he condescended to reply ; "but, perhaps, the wisdom of this age may enlighten me. As to ignorance and narrowness, of course that is not the question with our family ;" and, with an air that seemed to say that the question of woman's right to a separate individuality was settled forever, he began discussing the new postal arrangements, which H—— had started, and from that they went to "non-intervention," Kossuth, etc.

I felt choked ; I care not how much a person differs from me, I can respect his notions and try to understand his views, if he will only let me speak out my thought, and respect that as it is worthy. But this looking askance at all one says, — this taking a poor soul's words with the tongs and throwing them out the window, or fumigating them with salt and vinegar until there is no life in them, before they are permitted to cross the threshold, — saddens me. I would have each

one speak out his own convictions truly, and take them, rich or poor, as a godsend. We should lose something in smoothness and polish; many relations, now dovetailed together with such care, would find themselves breaking apart; but we should be infinite gainers in honesty, harmony and truth.

Nov. 14th. — Scene, a beautifully furnished room, the chairs, tables, sofa, *what-not*, etc., drawn up against the wall with as much precision as a company of the great Frederick's soldiers, — Miss Elizabeth Lytton seated on an ottoman, reading Mrs. Browning's noble poem, "*Casa Guidi Windows.*" Enter Aunt Sewal, who goes through with a critical review of the furniture, occasionally passing her delicate cambric handkerchief over it, to see if Mary has left a particle of dust, while she keeps up a kind of *miserere* over the carelessness of servants, and the troubles of housekeepers in general.

"Dear me, Mary has n't half dusted the room! It is too bad to hire servants and do your work yourself! And *that* Sophie, too! Elizabeth, don't you think that Sophie has completely ruined my elegant coffee-pot, — melted off the spout! I *do* feel as if I should fly every time I think of it! Such an elegant one as it was!"

Elizabeth is buried in this passage, —

"The dead upon their awful vantage ground,
The sun not in their faces, shall abstract
No more our strength; we will not be discrowned,
Though treasuring their crowns, nor deign transact
A barter for the present, in a sound
For what was counted good in foregone days.
O, dead, ye shall no longer cling to us!
—— we will not be oblivious
Of our own lives because ye lived before,
Nor of our acts because ye acted well;
We thank ye that ye first unlatched the door, —
We will not make it inaccessible
By thankings in the door-way any more," etc., —

and looks up, with all the glorious hopes it suggests warming her heart, and exclaims,

“How beautiful!”

“Yes, indeed, twice as handsome as Mrs. A——’s, and cost only the same. And to think it should be spoiled!”

Elizabeth opens her great, gray eyes in astonishment. “How—what, aunt?—I don’t quite understand!”

“No, I dare say not; no one ever does think it worth while to understand me or my troubles,—your uncle never does. As long as everything is on the table at the precise moment, he never asks how it has been done, or how much I have been tried. I said that careless Sophie has melted off the spout to my coffee-pot.”

It was evident that aunt’s usual pattern-like equanimity was sorely disturbed, and that she expected me to sympathize with her; but, having never experienced the loss of a coffee-urn spigot, I was somewhat at loss what to say or do; so I merely suggested that it could be mended.

“Mended!—an old, tinkered, mended thing on my table!” (N. B. Aunt prides herself on setting the nicest table in the neighborhood.) “What would the E——s and the F——s think?”

I ventured another suggestion, that she might purchase another. And so she might, she hoped, a dozen if she chose, but they would not be half so good as her old one. Mr. R——’s assortment! she did n’t want any one to tell *her* about such things. Her old one was worth a dozen of them; she had used it two years, and not a dent in it. What did I know about coffee-pots?

I saw my failure, and tried another tack,—Sophie’s sorrow over the accident,—but this was only adding fuel to the fire.

Well she might be sorry. To know no better than to set her urn down before a red-hot range, after all she had done

for her, too ! And she tripped out of the room to receive a morning call, and pour her sorrows into a more appreciating ear, I trust.

As for me, the steam from that unfortunate urn had completely dissolved my dreams of a glorious future for Italy ; so I sat and wondered why aunt's servants were supposed to be under such infinite obligations to her, unless, indeed, she looked at the matter philosophically, and considered herself in the light of a Heaven-sent trial, to exercise them in the rare virtue of patience.

Nov. 14th. — I was sitting by the table to-day — *improvising* all sorts of designs upon a piece of Bristol board, and thinking over my first lesson in drawing, and the quizzical face of "my master," when he asked me whether it was intended for a horse or a house — when aunt looked up from the wristband she was stitching, and asked what I was doing.

"Not much of anything," I answered. "I sat down to make a horse for little bubby Lee."

"Is that child here again, to-day ?" she asked, sharply.

"No, I promised him some days ago."

"I really should think, Elizabeth, that child had enough to spoil him, without you. His mother and grandmother make a fool of him ; and Mary, she must be running home every other day to see him ; or, what is worse, he is brought over here. I shall put a stop to this. I can't abide children !"

I looked up in her pretty, delicate, well-kept face, in wondering surprise ; but when, a moment after, she turned and spoke so caressingly to her pet canary, I knew that in the above assertion she had belied herself and the good God. Earth without children ! O, I do not believe that He sends a single soul into this world, to bear long, weary years of toil and sorrow, unbrightened by the love for little children ! No, nor that heaven can be heaven without childish faces and childish voices ; or that paradise was quite paradise without

them! I did not shock aunt by my heresies, however, but said, gayly,

"O, I don't wonder at Mary! If I had such a nephew, I would go twice as far to get a look at his healthy, happy face, any day. It is enough to put one in good humor for a month. I wish I *had* just such a boy!"

I had shocked her, but had only time to catch her "Why, Elizabeth Lytton!" when a hearty laugh, followed by a deep voice, crying, "A right, true, honest, womanly wish! Stick to the truth, Bessie, and shame the devil!" started me, and I turned to see the ample proportions of Dr. G—— filling the door-way, while his cheerful, intelligent face beamed down upon us from above the barriers of his fur collar, warm, heart-inspiring as the sun itself.

I sprang forward to meet him, for a short illness has made me acquainted with his excellences, and, what is better, won him to be my friend, but stopped short when he moved his broad shoulders aside, and I saw that he was accompanied by H—— and Harold T——; T——, whom I had not met in more than a year.

I fancy I have some control over my nerves, but this rushing current of blood is quite another thing. I felt it pouring to my heart like water in a mill-race, impelling me to spring forward and meet him; but I mastered it, and listened, as, with my hand buried in his great palm, the doctor went on,

"Get along, H——, and pay your respects to your aunt. Mr. T——, let me introduce you to a young friend of mine, Miss Elizabeth Lytton, a good, sensible sort of a girl, who, if it were not for a certain Lydia Mason—well, well, if there were no ifs in the world some strange things would happen."

This Lydia Mason is no other than the doctor's excellent wife, who, according to him, stands in the way of his wedding as many wives as Solomon. I turned to T——; but, O, Egypt, Thebes, Karnac and Luxor! ye contain not within

your mysterious temples one figure which can outrival, the calm immobility and cool indifference of his face, as, slightly touching my hand, he passed the usual compliments, and moved on to be introduced to my aunt.

What could it mean? He was the successful lawyer now; did he mean to ignore all memories and things connected with his earlier struggles? Possibly so; and for one moment I felt what Agassiz means by "Ice Periods."

The old doctor drew me along to a quiet sofa, and soon I roused myself enough to listen to his conversation; it was all of T——. His father had been an old college friend of his, a man of unstable mind, who was unfortunate in everything, if a man could really be said to be unfortunate who possessed such a son (the doctor is childless)—"the noblest, best boy that ever lived; the kindest, most considerate of sons"—and, though T—— had never spoken to me much of his youth, I knew it must have been so—"mother, a lovely woman, died when he was a mere boy,—he's the very image of her,—poor Ellen Bryne! I knew her as a girl;" and the good man's great, blue eyes filled with tears as he gazed proudly upon T——, who stood talking with aunt.

"She was a cousin of mine," he added,—and it was well he did so, for I began to wonder if some Lydia Mason had not stood between them, so marked was his interest,— "my cousin, and her boy inherited her spirit; educated himself, graduated with high honor, and had just commenced the study of law in the office of Judge B——, when the man, in whose hands the remnant of their property was deposited, failed, and left his father, broken down, feeble, purposeless and energyless, dependent upon him for support. He gave up his studies at once, and took the situation of principal of an academy in—well, somewhere in your region, I'll be hanged if I can remember the place, but somewhere on the Sound."

There was no need of his remembering—I *did*.

"He staid there two years, when his father happily died

Don't stare at me for saying *happily*, child. I did n't prescribe for him; besides, you cannot have lived in the world thus long, without seeing that there are some people in it who are evidently out of place. Mr. T—— was one of them — so he happily died.

"Now his son is a member of the New Haven bar, one of the most talented of his class, and is here, as counsel in the great case of '*Higgins versus Howe*.' A noble fellow," added the good man, rubbing his hands; "you must make his acquaintance, surely."

So he had ignored me to one who, it seemed, was his nearest friend. Well, I can be as proud as Harold T——, any day; so I chatted with the doctor and H——, who came and took the seat on the other side of me, and allowed him to wind the *crochet* purse I was netting over his delicate fingers (I do wonder why he cannot let my work alone), and tease to know if it was not designed for him, unchecked. Once T—— looked over that way with a glance that an hour before I would not have met for worlds — even now, it disturbed me for a moment; but I thought, what right has Harold T—— to stir my blood thus? Have I thought of him as "my master" until the sportive title has become real, and I am a slave to cower thus before his glance? So I glanced back like a northern iceberg; but, only a few moments after, I found myself yielding to the old fascination of his tones, as he discussed Whipple's lecture of the evening before, and, in reply to some remark of H——, analyzed the lecture and the lecturer in his calm, clear way, meting out praise and censure like a god. How those tones recalled the past! My heart made pictures: there was the small parlor looking out upon the sea — mother on the lounge with her book and knitting — the two figures by the table, one occasionally looking up from her drawing to answer some remark with which the other had interrupted his reading; and then that

voice swept on again, to the accompaniment of the restless waters. Did he not remember it, too?

I was roused from my reverie by aunt's voice :

"G——; why, that is where you and your mother lived awhile, Elizabeth. You must have been there about the same time with Mr. T——!"

I looked T—— coolly in the face a second, before I replied, "Yes, aunt."

Before she could question or comment, T—— said, with half a smile, "Miss Lytton is no stranger to me; I have had the honor of meeting her before."

"The deuce you have!" began the old doctor; but, having a sort of instinctive perception, I presume, that there was something beside Lydia Mason in the way here, he very wisely paused, and set to teasing H—— about his boot. Aunt, unfortunately, had not his foresight. She kept on: "Indeed, and Elizabeth is so much changed you hardly knew her. Don't you think the change for the better? We flatter ourselves it is." T—— bowed, and I prayed that aunt might be attacked with *bronchitis* — anything to stop her mouth; but she kept on. "We think a year or so with us will quite overcome her country manners — give her quite a refined and elegant air."

"Pshaw, Mrs. Sewal!" fell in the doctor; "we don't want any air but a natural one, and the girl has that now. Don't get any such nonsense into your head, child."

H—— and T—— both laughed, and I was glad when they left, after aunt had politely invited T—— to "call again."

Nov. 17th. — I ought to feel flattered, I suppose; for aunt, if I do not greatly mistake her, actually thinks I may do for a wife for her idol, H——. Whether H—— has had any hand in bringing her to take this view of the matter, I cannot say; I have no disposition to inquire. O, these match-makers!

Nov. 24th. — A whole week of rainy, dirty, foggy weather!

I don't believe any one can have patience with such weather ; not even the "Shepherd of Salisbury Plain," especially if he had been shut up in the house with Aunt Sewal all day, ay, and all night, too, for uncle is absent, and she has insisted on my occupying a cot-bed in her room, as a sort of guard — I, who sleep like a stone ! But I was obliged to yield, under fear of seeming disobliging ; and so have been lulled to sleep, every night, by a kind of doxology on H——'s perfections. I am cross and out of patience, and would welcome even a slight shock of earthquake, if it would shake up aunt's ideas, and give them a new direction. I like H—— ; I liked the way in which he defended poor Fanny R—— the other day, who, to say the least, has been more sinned against than sinning. He took me by surprise. I find, under the crust of fashion and conventionality, a good substratum of common sense ; and I would draw it out, and make the most of it, if it were not for this ridiculous plot of aunt's, and a kind of fancy I have, that the gentleman does, at times, think himself irresistible. I wonder what makes most men fancy that every unmarried woman is ready to fall into their arms, just like a fly into a cup of sweetened water ? Is it because they are so much like sweetened water ? Why cannot they have sense enough to see that a woman may really like their society, and feel a sincere regard for them, without "being in love with them," as the phrase runs ? And why cannot the world, so owlsh-eyed in most things, see that such a relation may exist without any desire or intention, on the part of either of the parties, to endow, or be endowed, "with all their worldly goods" ? It would be such a gain to be able to say to a person, "I like you," without being misunderstood ! It's a miserable, good-for-nothing world, any way.

Ah ! here comes Mary. That girl's face is a perfect magazine of sunbeams. And yet they say that the death of her father and brother have within two years reduced her from decent competence to the position of servant. As she comes

singing up the stairs, she calls, "See, Miss Elizabeth! It's clearing up!"

"How can you bear to sing in such weary, rainy weather, Mary?"

"O, I don't know; I sing without thinking; I suppose it's a habit I've got. I was thinking how nice this rain was for people who needed water! You know it has been so dry all the fall, Miss, that the cisterns and wells are very low. Besides, if one is contented, it does n't much matter about the weather;—at least, mother says so," she added, in a hesitating way.

Contented—satisfied with one's self? Ay, that is it. Have n't I been all the week restless, dissatisfied, and uneasy, laying all my misery to the weather? And why? It is time to face this question boldly. Because I dare not look into my heart, fearing to find there a love for Harold T——, which is neither sister's nor friend's; that I have disgraced my womanhood by loving unsought, unasked? No; that is the world's utterance, the world's law, not mine. I am truer, better, for that love; the shame—no, *pain*—lies here, that he may, has suspected it, and will teach me its futility. 'T is well; he shall find me not weak, nor backward in seconding his aim. I will meet this truth like a woman who is bent upon doing her best under all life's trials! And yet, what can I put in its place? The love of God? Alas, the heart is humanly weak!

"See, Miss Elizabeth! a light streak in the west. We shall have fair weather to-morrow!" cries Mary, from a distant chamber.

"Yes, I see!" Thank God that there are, also, light streaks in the darkest hours of destiny, if we have but faith and patience to watch and wait. It will dawn for me, yet!

Evening.—Uncle has returned from New York, bringing dress-patterns for aunt and me. Mine is a very nice Ture satin— aunt's a splendid watered silk. "It is proper that

my niece should be well dressed; I like to see her so," was uncle's reply to my thanks. I wish he had not said just *that*; but, then, I am very grateful. I need the dress very much; all the more because Miss Emilia Cranston, aunt's niece, is coming up to spend the holydays here, and my old black silk would look quite shabby, I fear. Mother thought I could afford to have a new one, before I left home, especially if she gave up buying an alpaca; but I convinced her that the alpaca *must* be had. I confess I am not philosophical enough to get quite above this matter of dress. I think there is more in the mind's craving for perfect harmony and fitness in outward things, than many of our sages admit. The dress of every woman should be evolved from her own mind—an indication of the grace, truth, purity, and beauty within. Hawthorne understands this;—the dark robe of Hester Prynne, the gay scarlet of "little Pearl," the rusty silk of Miss Hepzibah, and the variegated dressing-gown of poor Clifford, are redolent of character. Only as the "outward and visible sign" of the inward harmony should dress be made a study; never for vulgar display. I am glad Miss Cranston is coming. They say she is a belle and a beauty; but, as I shall interfere with her in neither of these matters, I fancy we shall be excellent friends.

Nov. 25th. — Helping aunt and Sophia in the kitchen this morning, and have won their admiration, for all time, by my skill in making sponge cake and icing. I have risen as much as two degrees in aunt's estimation; and rejoicing in this and the clear sunlight, happy in the thought of my new dress, Miss Cranston's expected arrival, and various other things (how little it takes to make one happy sometimes!), I was really delighted to see H—— when he called; all the more so (alas, poor human nature!) because I saw the horses as he passed the window, and knew he had come to escort me on a horseback ride.

O, what a glorious ride that was! How fresh and invig-

orating the rush of keen winter air, as we dashed down the W—— road — the ice-bound river sparkling in the sunlight, and the bare brown hills leaning back lovingly against the sky! How I longed to turn my horse's head towards these hills! I knew that among them there must be sunny valleys, like the one in which I had taken my first lesson on horseback, and I seemed to descry the very mountain paths up which Annie B—— and I had urged our horses, on our whortleberrying expeditions to the hills. Poor Annie B——! — no, happy Annie! — her feet have long since trod the dark valley, and the opposite slopes have been smoothed for her by angel hands.

Perhaps H——, too, had his memories; for he said, after a long silence, as we sat watching the scene:

"I like to go out on a winter's day like this, the air is so still, clear and cold. It seems to take from life all that is merely accidental and factitious, and show it to us in its original dignity and purity. I feel belittled when obliged to go back to the daily routine of petty cares. Have you never felt this, Miss Lytton?"

"Often, very often," I said, in pleased surprise. "But, my friend, do we take the lesson aright, if we fail to gain from it wisdom and strength to dignify these same petty details?"

"You are right — you are always right, Miss Lytton!" he said, thoughtfully. And so we chatted on, of life and life's duties, until we reached home. Was there, or was there not, a closer pressure of my hand than needful, when he helped me from the horse? Henceforth, I think I shall be countrified, and spring off unassisted.

Nov. 26th. — All the talk is of T——'s splendid plea. His talent, his eloquence, meet me on every side — prophecies of his future success; and I rejoice — miserable confession — when I can spare time from pitying myself.

Little "Bubby Lee" is ill — nigh unto death, they say.

Mary has gone home to assist in taking care of him. I must go and see him to-morrow.

Nov. 27th. — At widow Lee's.

They sleep at last, these poor, grief-stricken women, and I am left alone with the child. As he turns his swollen, purple face uneasily on the pillow, and I think how soon it may lie quite still beneath the winter snow, my eyes fill with tears and my heart aches; but not for the little one whose feet have wandered but such a little way from the gate of heaven, but for the mother and grandmother, along whose dreary path he seems the only visible sunbeam. His disease is scarlet fever, and my imprudence, as my friends term it, in coming into it, will keep me here or at Dr. G——'s until all danger of the infection is over. Uncle and aunt are in a great worry about it; but Dr. G—— promises to take care of me in case I do take it. He says he and his wife fear catching nothing of me but my "wilfulness." I intend to give him a taste of it, for I shall not leave these poor people until some one wiser than I comes to take my place; and that will not be immediately, I fancy, for the neighbors have all little children, whom they dare not expose to the infection. I have no fear — and these poor women cling to me and look up to me as if I were Minerva herself.

It is good to have one's energies taxed thus, and I thank Heaven for this experience, and every other that has taught me wisdom, or made me stronger for the battle of life. Mary and I do everything, from the dropping of the medicine on whose action hangs the life of the child, to the making of the mustard paste drafts for the feet. There is no abundance here, for the days when the widow's cruse was filled miraculously have gone by; but never did I feel so thankful for the early schooling that taught me how to "make the most of little" as now.

Nov. 28th. — I sat by the fire this morning toasting a piece of bread, and my face shining *a la* Captain Cuttle-

when I heard Dr. G—— calling me from the little entry. Toasting-fork in hand, I hurried out, and found my hands, bread, fork and all, clasped in those of H——, who, oblivious of his fawn-colored gloves, poured forth inquiries after my health.

"There, now you have seen her alive and well, with your own eyes," interrupted the doctor, as I was assuring him of my well-being, "I hope you are satisfied. I could n't get rid of the fellow, Bessie," he went on, "though I assured him you were never so well nor so handsome in your life; though you have got a 'beauty spot' on your cheek — it answers for a patch, dear," he went on, grimacing, as I raised my apron to efface the grim mark of the bread or something else. "He doubted my honor as a Christian man, the jackanapes, and insisted on seeing you with his own eyes. Hang him! he might teach perseverance to the saints."

"And in return for this interest I must turn him out the door. Indeed," I said, as I put out my hand to prevent his further entrance, "you must not come in. You can do no good, and you may do harm to yourself and others."

"And yet you stay here, Miss Lytton, and peril your own life, so dear to all your friends!" he said reproachfully. "Is there nothing I can do?"

"Yes, you can play the widow's good angel, and replenish our coal-bin; for I confess I don't understand the art of saving coal in such weather."

"But is there nothing else — nothing I can do for you?"

"Yes, you can go away now, and tell uncle and aunt that I am well, and thank them for permitting me to stay here."

"I almost forgot to tell you that Emilia Cranston arrived yesterday," he said.

"Then you can take my place, and play the agreeable to her," I said, laughing, as I shut the door in his face.

"Coolly done, that," said the doctor. "Take a little of

the stareh out of that fellow, so that common sense wil have full play, and he 'll do — he 'll do."

Evening. — It has been a terrible day — the little boy wrestling with death, and the mother in hysterical swoons. O, it is dreadful to see the sweet, innocent face of a child thus distorted with agony! My God, why need it be? Mary and her mother have watched over Mrs. Lee, and I have hung over the child until I can scarcely breathe. I don't know what ails me; the top of my head seems hot and heavy as burning lead.

Later. — Doctor has come, bringing with him a hard-featured, bony woman, whom he calls Mrs. Lane. She threw off her things, and came up and shook my hand as if it had been a mat or piece of rug, saying, half way between a laugh and a cry:

"So, you've been here all alone, and are clean fagged out, as such a young crittur has a right to be; for I know *them* there" — with a nod towards the bedroom door, where the poor mother lay — "kind critturs as ever breathed the breath o' life — do anything for other folks, but not worth a snap when trouble teches them. I've thought on ye all, but Jim was laid up with rheumatiz, so as he could n't stir hand nor foot. But Jim's as kind a crittur, I must say, as ever breathed; and when he heard how bad on't you was down here, and the neighbors all skeered to death, he telled me to send the boy over to Aunt Sally's, and come over; and so I did."

And she dropped my hand, and went round the room, putting things in their places. Talk of elastic steps and fairy feet, girls! When the spontaneous goodness of our hearts leads us to step as lightly in a sick-room as did this poor woman, we shall have some reason to be proud!

Midnight. — Mrs. Lane and the doctor watch the child, while, too anxious to sleep, I sit and watch them. Again and again the doctor examines the face of the child, while

his fingers never leave the thin wrist. At last a light breaks over his face, and he whispers:

"He will live, Bessie! The boy will live!"

I sprang to my feet, and was making for the bedroom, when he caught my hand.

"You foolish woman! Will you bring that doting grandmother and half-crazy mother upon us, to undo what little good we have done? Wait an hour or so."

So I sat down again, and began watching the play of his features, and thinking I wished I could sketch them, just as he sat. I would rather have his portrait than Kossuth's.

"Doctor."

"Hush, you witch! Cannot you write what you have got to say, without yelling like a screechowl?"

So I took a slip of paper, and wrote:

"Sit a little to the right, if you please, doctor."

"What for?" in a whisper, hoarse as the voice of a young Shanghai.

"I want to sketch your portrait."

"What will you do with it?" Then, with a horrible grimace, "Will that expression do?"

"Put it in my cabinet of curiosities."

"You can't have it. Do you not know it is written, 'Ye shall not make unto yourselves idols?'"

"Ay, but they must be in the likeness of something in heaven above or the earth beneath, you know. It is enough for a reasonable man that I want it."

He looked at me closely a moment, before he replied, —

"Lydia Mason shall see about that; but to prove that I am reasonable, I shall take you home with me to-night. So get your bonnet and cloak."

"I shall not go. Leave my charge because you say he is better!"

"You will!"

"I shan't!"

Dec. 20th. — At Dr. G——'s.

I did go; but how, or when, I have no distinct recollection. For many days there has been no morning nor evening for me; only fever, and pain, and delirium; the darkness that steals up from the valley of the shadow of death. O, it is good to suffer; for, without this, we should never know half the kindness and love that lies deep hidden in some hearts' The rock must be smitten before the refreshing waters will burst forth.

What but this could have made uncle and aunt watchers by my bedside; and the Lees, and Mrs. Lane, and H—— too,—all so anxious to do something for me; and, best of all, glorious Doctor G—— and his noble wife? Surely they will have their reward; "for I was a stranger and they took me in!"

Here comes the doctor, holding up a letter; he frowns horribly at the sight of my occupation. Well, well, I promise — not another word to-day; and so I get my letter.

Dec. 21st. — Mother's letter is unique. The dear woman has all unconsciously achieved the *desideratum* in letter-writing; for it places the home and neighborhood interests, cares and joys, as plainly before me as if I were in the midst of them myself. Yet how strange such passages as these would sound in the ears of many of my city friends, — H——, for instance, who is enthusiastic over the beauty of rural life:

"Potatoes are going down, and last week George F—— carted all we have to spare to G——, at fifty cents *per* bushel. It makes quite a difference in the profits, as we reckoned them; but I hope to make it up on the hay. That is rising, and Mr. F—— advises me to keep it a while longer, thinking it will get up to twenty dollars *per* ton before spring. It has been so warm that we have not butchered the pigs yet; but Mr. F—— killed last week, and his largest weighed four hundred and fifty lbs. Black Ann is to help me about the work; so you need not worry about me."

Yet, to me, that fall in the price of potatoes is a serious matter; for, if we cannot make up the difference somehow, we may find ourselves homeless; for our hard creditor, Mr. J——, gives us no choice — the interest of the mortgage, or the house and few remaining acres themselves.

Here is a postscript:

“Be very careful to please your uncle and aunt, my child. It is very kind in him to notice us, and his favor can be of great advantage to you in many ways.”

Ah! there spoke — not my mother, but the worldly wisdom which such natures as hers gain from circumstances.

O, the heaviest curse of poverty is not that we must earn our bread by the sweat of the brow, but the constant canker-ing care it brings, eating into the finest natures like rust! Men praise it as a teacher of great truths, and so it is; but, if it sometimes develops the intellect, it not unfrequently dwarfs the heart. To be free from these petty cares — to be able to free others — to lift the leaden weights from the spirit, and give it a free development — this is why I would be rich.

As to uncle's kindness in noticing us, methinks it would have been more apparent, and to the purpose, had he done it when you, my mother, were struggling to give an education to your fatherless child! Now, when we have won for ourselves friends among the good and learned, I fancy it is no condescension in him to acknowledge “my niece.”

Dec. 22d. — H—— and Miss Cranston called to see me to-day. She is beautiful, and was kind enough to express an earnest wish to have me return to uncle's. H—— is certainly losing his tact, or he would never have forgotten himself so far as to have said it was “dull and stupid” at uncle's without me, and that lady by his side! I thought Miss Cranston, in spite of her *retenue*, looked rather annoyed. I never knew him guilty of such a *betise* before.

Dec. 23d. — I am to go home after dinner, Christmas-day.

Aunt has been here, and doctor and she have finally settled it thus. She was in excellent spirits, and talked of the parties which were to be given during the holidays, and which Emilia and I would be expected to attend — “such a good opportunity for me to see something of city life.”

The doctor said nothing, but sat and drew coffins on the margin of the newspaper before him, as a sort of warning to me, I suppose, of the end to which these parties would lead; and somehow I grew sad and dismal, and was glad when aunt left.

Doctor and his wife are plotting some conspiracy, I believe; for even now they are whispering outside the door. When he comes in again, I will make him think his hoarse whispers have betrayed his secret.

Dec. 24th. — He came in, the good doctor, with a face so sad that I almost repented of my plotted mischief. He “pished” and “pshawed” at the “Era,” which he took from the table, and seemed in anything but a peaceable, Christian temper. At last I said:

“You need n’t look so solemn, doctor, I know all about it.”

“The deuce you do!” his face evidently brightening. “Who could have told you?”

“O, it’s an age of wonders; perhaps the rapping spirits. Of course I should not be left long in ignorance of what so nearly concerns me.”

“True,” and he seated himself by my side, and looked at me long and earnestly, before he added, “Then you don’t care for this, child?”

“Yes, indeed, very much. But I might care a little more intelligently, if I only knew precisely what the great ‘*this*’ is.”

“Why, you said you *did* know!”

“So I do, that you and Mrs. G—— are plotting some Christmas surprise for me. I heard you in the hall, — some-

thing to add to earth's sunlight, or it would not be you, kind friend ; " and my eyes filled with tears at the thought of all I owed them.

"Sunlight! I wish it was! Such a miserable earth as this is! filled with all manner of rascalities. I have tried to make the best of it until I am tired, and the sooner it is burned up the better!" And he got up and gave the fore-stick a kick (he insists on my sitting by a wood fire) that sent a shower of sparks up the chimney, as a preliminary, I suppose, to the grand conflagration he deemed so desirable.

Seeing he was seriously disturbed about something, I repressed the jest that rose to my lips, and waited his next words in silence.

"I feel just as if I could fight, Bessie," he said at length, settling himself in the chair by my side. "I am angry at myself and everybody else, yourself included, for I have something to say to you, and you don't help me a bit."

"To me!" I said, rather startled. "What is it?"

"It is what you will deem an impertinent question; but, tell me, child," — he went on very seriously, taking my hands in his, — "has Harold T—— ever been to you aught but a friend? — ever by word or glance sought to win your love?"

"Doctor G——, will you tell me why I am to answer this question — which — which" —

"Does not concern me, you would say. Can you not trust me thus far, my child, without a reason?" he asked. "I said by word or glance," he added, seeing me still hesitate.

O, words of mocking raillery, high courage, and earnest interest, — glances whose mission begun when that of words ended, — how ye stood out from the past! but not *one* which might not have fallen from a brother's lip or eye! And so I told the doctor, and more, how that I had met him at a period when my moral and intellectual being were struggling for some wider development than contented those around me; how he had kindly slackened his own swift pace in the march

of progress, to aid my stumbling steps; how he had been teacher, friend, master, but nothing more; and an earnest "Thank God!" was the reply.

"But may I know," I added, after a moment's pause, "what led you to suppose such a thing?"

"He told me himself that he had boarded with your mother more than a year, and, knowing you both, I could not well conceive how it could be otherwise: besides" —

"What, doctor?"

"I would not say *what*, were it not needed to explain my impertinence. You were delirious when you were ill, and" —

I saw it all, and buried my burning face in my hands, while tears of womanly pride rushed to my eyes.

In a moment or two, he gently raised my head as he said, "Forgive me, Bessie. It was but the raving of delirium — I am convinced. I would n't have distressed you so for a less reason."

"What is that reason?" I asked, looking him once more firmly in the face.

"Harold T—— is about to marry the niece of Judge A——, the widow N——. I have it on what I believe good authority; and I could not bear to think that he who had stood to me in the stead of the children God has denied me, was an unmitigated scoundrel. It is bad enough as it is!"

I drew my hand from his, that he might not mark the throbbing pulse, and, after a moment's silence, asked,

"This Mrs. N——; what kind of woman is she? One worthy of Harold T——?"

"Yes, rich, and vain, and ambitious!" he replied, getting up and kicking the fire, as if he were punishing Harold by proxy. "I wonder I could be so angry when Mr. X—— expressed surprise that she should stoop to him!"

"That is no answer to my question, doctor. Is she worthy of him?"

"Bessie," he said, again sitting down, "I had got a plan into my head which this news has sadly disturbed, and, like most positive men, when they see their schemes thwarted, am cross and ill-tempered. Perhaps I would play the part of Providence too much, and so am reminded of my weakness. Is she worthy?—but, tell me, what should Harold's wife be like?"

"Like that," I said, pointing to a drift of unsullied snow without; "pure in thought, word and deed; yielding to him like that to the rays of the sun, but firm to all the world beside. She must be all the world to him, or nothing."

"And Harriet N—— is likelier to be something to all the world than to her husband, unless her passion for admiration be much abated," he replied, dryly. "He must be attracted by her wealth, and the connection the match will afford him. Her uncle has offered him a partnership in his office, I hear. I will never attempt to judge character again, so honest, so self-reliant, he seemed. He came here to inquire after you twice before he left the city, and, when he turned away his face, as I spoke of your danger, I thought—but 't was all a sham. O, he has grown scheming betimes! He will be a judge, yet!"

Why should he ask after me at all? What was I to him, what could I give him?—this poor, undeveloped girl, who had caught light and life from his teachings.

And then I thought of the beautiful and accomplished Mrs. N——, of all she could do for him, the weary struggles which her position and wealth might save him—those struggles which ever attend the first years of a poor professional man's life—and I spoke of this to Dr. G——.

"Better that he face them like a man, than escape by a mercenary marriage!" thundered he. "It is just that which gives strength and stamina to the character! Faugh! I despise such cowardice."

"But the marriage may not be mercenary. He doubtless loves her, and she cannot fail of loving Harold T——."

"Others have, it seems," he answered dryly; then went on alternately berating them both, until, for old kindness' sake, I roused myself to interfere.

"You wrong them, doctor. You are angry, and so wrong them both. This Mrs. N—— is not unworthy simply because she is fashionable. Besides, you say, she has two children; and she cannot be quite the frivolous thing you make her out, with such a bridge between her and heaven."

"Get out of the way, then!" he replied, half way between a grin and a smile. "It's enough to provoke a saint, to hear you defend such folly! If it were not proof that you do not care for him, I should be tempted to swear!" And he flung himself out of the room, and, a moment after, I saw him driving furiously down the street.

Christmas Eve. — The doctor and his wife are singing Milton's glorious hymn of the Nativity below, and there is a harmony and tenderness in their tones, as they reach me, better than all art. So have they sung together, on every Christmas eve, for twenty-five years. May it be long before God calls them to sing it on high!

"Bessie, come help us!" calls the doctor.

No, friends; I am passing through the Valley of Humiliation to-night, and the *Miserere Deus mei* is a more fitting strain for me, than that song of joy. I am struggling with pride and weakness; and when I conquer, as by the help of God I surely shall, I may, perchance, find that herb, "heart's-ease," which is said to grow so plentifully here, and be able to sing with the shepherd-boy of whom Bunyan speaks:

"He that is down need fear no fall;
He that is low, no pride;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide."

Christmas Day.—Last night life seemed so mean and worthless, I was so weak and selfish, that I could not hear the song of the angels—could see nothing in this great universe, but my own petty self; but this morning it is better. There is nothing like right, true, honest, friendly words and glances to lay evil spirits! They are sometimes better than prayer and fasting. I was convinced of this when I met the friendly greeting of the doctor and his wife this morning, and looked upon his radiant face. Surely, I told him laughingly, in Sir John Suckling's words:

“No sun upon an Easter day
Was half so fine a sight;”

but he suggested “warming-pan” as being, at the same time, more “correct and professional.”

How pleasant was that small breakfast-room,—how delicious the coffee and the buckwheat cakes!

“Bessie,” said good Mrs. G——, after breakfast, “we always let Sally go to church on Christmas day, and, as we shall have to hurry, we shall press you into the service. Will you seed these raisins?”

I don't know what there was about those raisins, but with every seed I flung out my heart grew lighter, and I had struck up an accompaniment to Mrs. G——'s song, as she tripped back and forth between the breakfast-room and the kitchen, when the doctor put his head into the door with,—

“Well, Lydia, I am going!”

“Where?” she asked, scarcely interrupting her song.

“First, to see Mr. P——, then to poor Pat Smiley's.”

“I hope you'll find them better, poor souls! Sally, don't let the rice burn!” cried the good woman, as she went up to her husband to arrange his shirt-collar, which, whatever may be the prevailing fashion, always manifests something of the wearer's individuality, and stands just as it has a mind to.

“O, the deuce take the collar!” he cried, seizing her hand

and drawing his head in and out of his furs, like a turtle. "Have you nothing to think of but rice and starch, this morning?"

"O, yes, a plenty of things; puddings, and vegetables, and the cranberry sauce, — I came near forgetting that," she said, laughing and attempting to get free.

But he held her tight while he said, looking down into her eyes, gravely:

"There is another sauce for our Christmas dinner, wife, which I am afraid you have forgotten."

"What is it?" she asked, all the housekeeper stirring in her at once. "I have tomato, quince," —

"No, no," he said, interrupting her, "I see you have not got it, but if you will take that nice baked spare-rib, on the second shelf in the pantry (I've been in there), a few mince pies, and anything else that comes handy, and put them into my carriage, I guess I can find what we want at Pat Smiley's. Don't you think, wife, that the knowledge that those hungry-eyed, gaunt little ghouls of his (there are a dozen or so of them) are well fed for once in their lives, will give a better relish to our own dinner, than ketchup or cranberry?"

She looked up in his face a moment, before she flew to do as he suggested; and that man must be worse than a Hottentot who would not prize such a revelation higher than the applause of the whole world.

Mrs. G—— and Sally both went to church, leaving me to watch the baking; and between that and writing a little to mother I spent the morning.

When I entered the dining-room, I found out the meaning of all the whispering and plotting yesterday, for "Bubby Lee," looking almost as rosy and plump as before his illness, ran into my arms with his "Merry Christmath, Mith Itton;" and the two widows, mother and daughter, and Mary, came round me, uttering the same kind wishes mingled with grateful tears.

They had all been invited to dinner, and the doctor, quite opportunely for my composure, ordered them all to their seats at the table, brandishing his carving-knife threateningly at Mary, who insisted on waiting on the table with Sally.

"I am as hungry as a bear, good people," he said, as he piled up their plates with good things, "and I heartily hope that you will keep me company. — No, no ketchup; I got enough of that sauce we spoke of this morning, to last through one dinner. Wife, did you know you had an angel for your husband?"

"I thought I had a warming-pan, this morning," she said.

"All right — there is a closer connection between warming-pans and angels than some people think. — Take some more of this dressing, Mrs. Lee?"

"What sort of an angel, doctor?" I asked; "there are two kinds, you know."

"One right from heaven, according to Pat Smiley and his wife: and they, being true believers, ought to know. So no insinuations, Miss." And he went on to give us such a ludicrous account of the gratitude of the poor Irish family, mingled with, here and there, true touches of pathos as he described the condition of the helpless father, as compelled both our laughter and our tears.

The happy faces of the Lees were good sauce for our festival dinner, and we ate it with happy hearts. And when, on rising from the table, the doctor fervently thanked God, not merely for the good things which had been set before us, but that He had put it into our hearts to share them with others, I felt the true meaning of the custom; for the mean and the dishonest, the wicked and hard-hearted, may sit at loaded tables but God alone can put it into their hearts to share their goods with others.

Catching up the little boy in his arms, he led the way to the parlor, which I had found, to my surprise, close locked, in the morning. He now unlocked the door, threw it open, and

there, in the centre of the room, stood a table covered with gifts. No Christmas tree could have supported the beautiful illustrated copy of Shakspeare that bore my name, nor the heavy, warm material for winter clothing, which they had provided for their other guests.

"That will keep you warm on your way to school, this winter," said the doctor, flinging a nice "Bay State" shawl over Mary's shoulders, as his wife placed in her hand a certificate of her membership in the "Webster High School," for the ensuing term.

"Bessie was planning to make a dress-maker of you, Mary," said the doctor; "but my wife happened to see the accounts you keep for your mother, and thought a clerkship in Mr. C——'s store would be much better for you, seeing that fashionable dress-makers are, with reference to their apprentices, very much like the horseleeches, crying, 'Give! give!' without an adequate equivalent in return. I know something about this, for Lydia Mason and I took the trouble to inquire. And, Bessie, next time you feel inclined to advocate 'women's rights,' please bear in mind the fact, that we men do give our apprentices their board and a fair knowledge of their business, if nothing more; while a girl is made to board herself, and kept sewing away at cross-stitch and back-stitch, and the Lord knows what, for a whole six months or a year, and at the end knows no more about fitting a dress than I do. And if she were to stay three years, it would be just so, for when women do choose to serve the devil, they do it with a better grace than we men. Is it not so, Bessie?"

I was obliged to confess that I knew more than one young girl, who had sewed six months for her mistress, earning her fair wages, and had returned home an adept in making all sorts of trimmings, but without ever having been permitted to fit a common muslin dress.

People talk of the eloquence of gratitude, but when the heart is full, it is still. Our guests found it so; — they had

"no words" they said, and that was enough. But as they sit over their humble fire to-night, talking over their dinner, and viewing again and again their presents, I much doubt if they do not think, with Pat Smiley's wife, that the doctor and his wife are good as angels, or even better, — at least, better judges of flannels, lambs-wool stockings and shoe-leather. At least, I thought so, when, with loving words and smiles, and some tears, they wrapped me up, buried me in furs and shawls, and with Mrs. G——'s motherly kiss and blessed words on my brow and in my heart, the doctor placed me in his carriage and drove to my uncle's.

My heart was full, too full for words, and the sight of the happy faces in the street, the troops of rosy children, the sound of the merry Christmas greetings as we drove along, only deepened my sense of the divine love which it seemed must penetrate every heart.

As we drove up at uncle's door, H—— stood on the steps to receive us; but, as he sprang to the side of the carriage, the doctor put him aside, with some joke about being superseded by a younger man, and, taking me in his arms, bore me in and placed me on the sofa.

They gathered round me with their Christmas greetings, and I, like a simpleton, burst into tears. Then there was confusion; uncle crying out that I was fainting, aunt, Emilia, and H——, running all ways for restoratives, while the doctor quietly seated himself by my side, undid my wrappings, and whispered, "Is this really the wisest thing you can do, Bessie?"

I could not help smiling at his look; and, taking a glass of water from H——, I shook off my tippets, and begged uncle's pardon for being so nervous.

Happily, uncle and aunt felt it incumbent upon them to be very thankful to Doctor G——, and say a great deal of their obligations.

"Obligations!" said the latter, laughing; "ask my wife

about that. Why, 't was only yesterday she convinced me that we could give more in Christmas charities this year than ever, because God had blessed us with the love of this girl here. My wife has a curious way of seeing things; but H—— here looks as if he understood all about it."

If H—— did, uncle and aunt did not; but uncle said he was infinitely obliged to Mrs. G—— for her good opinion of his niece, and aunt always knew her "to be a very kind-hearted woman;" and so the doctor took his leave.

Sophie came in to welcome me back; and certainly her yellow face was not the least pleasant thing that met my sight.

But they were all in excellent spirits; uncle unbent himself so far as to laugh at some of the pointed sallies flying between H—— and Emilia, and aunt seemed for once in the world quite forgetful of household cares. Tired and weak, I sat and watched them, and thought how handsome they were, — all four, — and could understand something how a man of uncle's mental *calibre* must feel towards one as plain-looking as "my niece." Emilia and H—— are both worthy of their race. I could not help whispering some of these thoughts to aunt, who opened her eyes, and answered:

"Ay, just so; Emilia, though, is more of a Cranston than an H——. The Cranstons are a fine-looking family. But what are you saying, child? You are not so very plain, — not ugly, you know. Indeed, now, I think this illness has improved you. You have lost that — well, that fulness of the chest and shoulders, that *country* look, as I call it. With a little attention to dress, your figure will be quite slender to what it was before. By the by, do you know H—— admires your figure? He says it is just the style which one sees in the paintings of the old masters. We had quite a discussion about it the other day, and he half convinced me that he was right."

As he always does, I mentally added, while I prayed that

H—— might not take it into his head to make me the chief figure in his domestic pictures.

But this prayer was needless, my uncle, my mother's own brother, has saved me any further trouble on this score. My face even now burns with shame, when I think of the mean, parsimonious character they must think me; and I would fain have had their esteem.

O, did they know what it is to be in debt! — to be obliged to calculate every little expense, or leave my mother shelterless! Could I make up my mind to explain all this — go into the details; but, no, I will not do it; I should be but a beggar in their eyes — just what I seem now. I will go home — I will go into my school again, and He who “tempers the wind to the shorn lamb” will care for us!

But let me look at this thing as it is. One day, before I went to Mrs. Lee's, at aunt's request I accompanied her to a jeweller's store. She made some trifling purchase, and then asked to look at some sets of pearl ornaments, arranged in a new style, which they had advertised. She asked my opinion of them, and also of some elegant silver card-cases, and I said they were “very beautiful.”

“Lizzie Olinstead has just bought a set. Would not you like one, Elizabeth? They would be just the thing for you,” she said.

The sight of all these rich and beautiful things had brought very vividly to my mind the thought of our poverty, and I answered hastily,

“No, aunt; I would much rather have the money they would cost.”

I had forgotten all about it, when, just as I was getting to feel at home among them to-night, uncle placed before Miss Cranston a box containing one of those identical sets of pearls, and a beautifully chased card-case, as Christmas gifts from himself and aunt; then, turning to me, put into my hand a bank-note, saying, in his coldest, driest tone,

"It was the intention of your aunt and myself to give you a set of ornaments and a case like Miss Cranston's, Elizabeth; but, understanding that you value ready money higher than such tokens of affection, you have the equivalent there."

I did not see H——'s look of wonder or Miss Cranston's stare. I only *felt* them, while I saw my father laboring with his pen, with the death-mark on his brow, that my mother need not ask aid of those who had spurned her for his sake. I heard only his low whisper, as he drew my little arms around his neck, the morning he died, and, with great, bright eyes looking into mine, whispered between his fits of coughing:

"Take good care of your mother, my little Bessie; she will have no one but you now."

This memory, and the consciousness that I had fulfilled my father's command, kept me on my feet now, weak as I was, though I dared not trust myself to speak, but stood motionless, holding in my outstretched hand the bill towards uncle.

"Is there any mistake, child? That bill is a good one," he said, in that same hard tone.

I could bear it no longer. Dropping the bill on the table, I burst into tears, and fled to my room. What must they think of me? Why should I care? O, is this cold, proud, unsympathizing man my mother's brother, and could he find it in his heart to humiliate me thus? But he knew not what he did. Ah, yes, father, he knew not what he did, and I can bear it. But I will go home.

There, that is aunt's step coming on the stairs! Now no more tears.

Dec. 26th. — It was aunt, and, to my great surprise, she was followed by uncle, both anxious to know if I was ill, if I felt any return of my fever, that I behaved so strangely.

I felt more than ever, as I listened to their inquiries, that I could not explain, so I merely said that aunt had misunder-

stood the meaning of my remark in Mr. R——'s store; that I had forgotten all about it, and therefore was surprised at being charged with the meanness of hoarding money for itself.

Uncle interrupted me by saying that he was very glad to find he was mistaken; that it seemed strange that one so young should be tainted by so low a vice, especially a lady, but from the knowledge he had of my family on my father's side — I rose to my feet at once, and, with a firmness and a pride which I was scarcely conscious of possessing before, interrupted him:

"Allow me to remind you, sir, that, under your own roof, the name of a guest's father should be sacred. That is one of the lessons my own father taught me as a child; and you wrong him, you wrong my mother, — your own sister, sir," — I went on, my woman's nature getting the better of my calmness, — "when you presume to hint that he sought her from mercenary motives. O, you did not know him, or you would never dream of such a thing!"

Uncle gazed at me a moment between surprise and indignation. I think the former predominated, for the remark that he made, as soon as he gained breath, indicated that he did not dream that any one in his senses could talk thus to a Sewal. It was this, and addressed to aunt:

"It must be that Elizabeth is light-headed still. Had we not better send for Dr. G——?"

Aunt's woman's nature gave her an inkling of the truth. She said I was weak and tired out, and rather hysterical; that she would sit with me awhile, while he went down. Then — Heaven help the well-meaning but simple-minded soul! — she went on trying to explain to me the mistake, and, in so doing, repeated the remarks my conduct had elicited down stairs; how grave H—— had looked, and how Miss Cranston had said she would not have believed it possible for any *lady* to be so mean; and when she had tried to

explain, by telling something of my circumstances in life, Emilia had not thought it so strange, for she "supposed poor people, who are obliged to count every cent they spend, must naturally think a great deal of money."

O, what a Job's comforter was this aunt of mine, with her lack of tact and heart-knowledge! Sitting there, in her rich silk dress, with her exquisite cap and faultless laces, she brought to my thought another figure. Which looked best in the eyes of the angels, I cannot say, but I know which most comforted my sore and weary heart. It was the figure of our kind neighbor, Mrs. F——, coming across the fields, with her yellow flannel blanket on her shoulders, and a spotted muslin cap, with wide, crimped borders, shading her face, to see if mother was quite well — if she would need any little thing done for her, which her boys, Bill or John, could do, while I was busy in my school — always saying some strong, hopeful, cheering word. That yellow flannel blanket covers a noble heart. Would that I could rest my head against it this moment and hear her "Never mind, child, there are briers enough in one's path at times, I know, but they will all be cleared away at last!"

New-Year's Day, 1852. — All goes on here the same as before that scene on Christmas evening, save that uncle's manners have been a little more frigid and stately than usual. Miss Cranston evidently considers me as one whom she can patronize. She has shown me all her dresses and jewelry, and given me a history of all her flirtations and friendships; in short, I am in a fair way to be installed as confidant to a beautiful belle — not to say coquette. A strange position for one like me.

H—— seems more thoughtful, grave and manly, than he did before that affair. He has never referred to it, unless it was by a glance this morning, when he came in to ask me to ride a short distance, and presented Miss Cranston and aunt each with a beautiful brooch, while he placed in my hand a

most magnificent bouquet of pansies, saying something about my great love of flowers. I was touched by this proof of his delicacy, and was not ashamed to let him see it. He never seemed more worthy of being beloved than at that moment.

There have been several parties, the past week, which I have been obliged to enjoy second-hand from the piquant descriptions of Miss Cranston and H——. I have plead ill-health for not attending, and the excuse has been accepted. Indeed, I am not strong, and so to-day I am permitted to keep my room, while Emilia, after the New York custom, receives calls. She flits back and forth, between the parlors and my room, like a beautiful bird, to report her calls. Just now she came in to tell me she had received a call from H——, and begged me to guess who was with him.

"How should I know, dear?" I said, smiling at her eagerness. "Your impatience would never wait until I had done guessing."

"How stupid! Why, it was Mr. T——, the young lawyer, whom they are all talking about."

"Mr. T——; I thought he was in New York."

"O, he's on his way to Boston, and so called to see me. O, I wish the P——s and V——s knew it!"

"Why?"

"O, because it would vex them so. They are dying to get him to visit at their houses."

"But what is there peculiar about the man?"

"O, enough. He never compliments, or, at least, very rarely. And then he says such queer things, — just what he thinks of you. For instance, I was playing one day when he called at our house, and, at his request, kept on. I played brilliantly; and when I had finished, instead of professing himself 'delighted,' 'charmed,' and all that, he never said a word, only gave me a simple bow. Determined to make him speak, I asked him, laughingly, if the piece was not well executed? What do you think he said? Why, 'No, not for

one with my superior talent for music and opportunities for practice.' Did you ever hear anything so odd? And yet, for the life of me, I couldn't be angry. By the by," she added, putting her head back through the door, as she flitted out, "he said he had met you here, and made due inquiries. I referred him to H——, as being the best qualified to answer, having driven you out this morning."

"They say he is to marry Mrs. N——, of your city," I said.

"Not if I can get him myself;" and away she flew. Well, well, what is it to me?

Jan. 8th. — "But our house is so much warmer and more comfortable than even the best of country houses; so much better for you, in your state of health, that you will not think of going home until spring, child; certainly not, now that your mother has written advising you to stay."

Aunt and I were discussing a letter which I received from mother yesterday, in which, anxious for my health, she had advised me to remain in the city until the spring; and aunt, as above, warmly seconded her wish.

I suppose I shall have to remain a while longer, at least, or deeply offend these good people; but "warin' and comfort!" — there is more warin' and comfort in my mother's eyes than in all the anthracite ever discovered.

Jan. 9th. — I remember having seen somewhere a "diary" of Peggy Dow, consort of the celebrated Lorenzo Dow, in which divers events were put down under the head of "*Remarkable Experiences.*" I think the affair of this morning must come under that head. Some half dozen times since I came here I have met uncle's partner, Mr. A——, a tall, lean, bald-headed man, with a complexion like an old bank note, all wrinkled and yellow. He has a way of talking in monosyllables, as if a niggard of his breath. He has never condescended to notice "my niece," further than by the shortest of bows and monosyllables; therefore, I was much sur-

prised this morning, when uncle sent for me to his room and told me, in his most polite tones, that this Mr. A—— had made me an offer of his hand and fortune; he did not say *heart*, and it was well he did not, for I should have laughed in his face. However, I kept a grave face, while he condescended to point out to me the advantages which would result both to my mother and myself, from the match. He laid great stress on our present straitened condition, and the “low vulgar people” with whom it necessarily forced us to come in contact, if not to associate — my mother’s declining health; in short, he took me up to the pinnacle of the modern temple of wealth and position, and showed me all the goodly things that might be mine if I would sell myself to this respectable piece of old parchment, Mr. A——; and then very politely saying, with a look at my face and figure, that a woman in my position could hardly hope to do better, left it for me to decide.

I very decidedly, but very briefly, declined the honor, saying that he ought to know that considerations of wealth had little influence with one of my father’s family.

He stared at me a moment, then coolly bowed me out of his room, as he would one of his business clerks. But I see he is decidedly angry, else I should be inclined to laugh at the whole affair.

Jan. 10th. — I must ride no more with H——. It is evident that he loves me, and I will spare himself and me the pain of an *eclaircissement*, if possible. This Queen Vashti air will not answer much longer; but, thank Heaven, I shall soon go home! It is the most convincing proof of the truth of my suspicions, that he thus defers to my will, — he, the accomplished man of the world. And yet, this very trait renders him unfit to be my husband. He whom I call by that name must be guided by no one but God and his own convictions.

Jan. 15th. — They have been spoken — those words which

I so dreaded to hear; and, O, Heaven! what am I, that I should inflict such pain and suffering upon any human soul? Never did he seem so truly good and noble as when, putting aside all earthly considerations, he plead in trembling tones for my love, for life's best boon from my hands!

And yet, never did I feel it more impossible to grant his prayer. God knows I would have done so, if I could; I would have put away my long-cherished dreams as idle, had I found any response to his words. I even plead for him; I set before me all his goodness and nobleness, his growing sympathy with my tastes and pursuits, the wide influence for good which, he urged, I possessed over him. I thought of my mother — of the life of toil and isolation that lay before me; but there came no response, and I dare not trifle with eternal truth.

He plead for hope, and urged the love which is the meed of years of tenderness and devotion. It cannot be. I have been down into the innermost recesses of my heart, and I know, by the love that went out so spontaneously toward another, that there are abysses of tenderness — ay, passion — there, that H—— has no power to move; and, knowing this, I dare not trust to years.

So I let him look into my heart,— God gave me strength to do it,— and, with an incoherent blessing on me for my truth, he went out into the storm and darkness; but the wintry sleet, nor the north wind, nor the darkness, is not more cold and dreary than the heart he has left behind! O, they know not woman's heart who talk of the pride of conquest!

There is nothing on God's earth that teaches humility, like the consciousness of being deeply and truly beloved!

Jan. 16th. — Kept my room all day, feeling sad, weak, miserable. There was "a lion in the way," let me turn in any direction. Aunt came up, good and prosy and practical, and talked about blisters back of the ears. Heaven knows I would have covered myself with them if they would

have drawn back my faith and hope — my courage and strength. I heard Emilia below chatting to some young friends, for she has already become a favorite in society, and I sat and pitied myself, a plain, poor, ungifted soul, until I suddenly thought of Milton's noble line :

“ Those serve who only stand and wait ; ”

and it brought aid and comfort. What cowards we are !

Jan. 18th. — They say H—— has gone to New York, *en route* for Europe ! Doctor G—— was sitting with us when Emilia came in, having just heard the news up town. Suddenly, interrupting herself in her exclamations of surprise, aunt turned to me : “ You said H—— called here the evening we went to hear Holmes' lecture. Did he say nothing of this, Elizabeth ? ”

“ No, certainly not, aunt ; ” and joy that I was thus able to speak the truth gave me courage to boldly face Doctor G——'s searching look.

But I *was* glad that uncle came in that moment, and created a diversion in my favor. He never sees mystery in anything that cannot be solved by the interest table, and thought H—— gone to Europe on business. “ Stocks are rising, and he has some interest there, I believe,” he said.

“ Stocks, uncle ! ” said Emilia, impatiently. “ When did Fred. H—— ever trouble himself about stocks, I should like to know ? ”

“ I'm really afraid it's an attack of brain fever,” began aunt, despondingly. “ His father died of it, and he has been threatened with it more than once. Don't you think so, doctor ? ” she asked, anxiously.

“ Not at all, my dear madam. Not that a young fellow's brain — ay, and blood, too — does not get into a strange sort of whirl once in a while, but from other causes than congestion.” And again he scanned my face closely.

Aunt sighed, and uncle spent a whole twenty minutes, a

long time for him, in trying to prove to her the impossibility of there being any hereditary taint in the blood of her family — a family related to him.

According to him, all his own relatives have died through some oversight which might have been seen and provided for, had they been endowed with his wisdom. I presume he expects to be translated.

Jan. 20th. — Emilia takes H——'s absence to heart. What does it mean? Underneath that war of words, which sometimes bordered on sarcasm, between them, did there lurk a deeper feeling? I must look to this. She is in high spirits to-night, though, because Mr. E——, who lectured before the "Institute" last night, is to dine here to-morrow. She prophesies I will fall in love with him at once. Perhaps so; I shall see.

Jan. 21st. — He has been here — the author, poet, prophet, whom I have revered for years. I have looked upon his face, listened to his voice, and it is much to say that he did not disappoint me. The face is good, grave, and serene; but his chief power lies in his voice and manner, which grows on one until it becomes a complete fascination.

At least, so I thought, when he turned from the mixed company, after dinner, and began to talk to me of Browning's poems, which lay upon the table. Perhaps I was prepossessed by the interest with which he listened to my remarks, but every word seemed the echo of a loving heart, an earnest soul, and a subtle intellect; subtle and beautiful, rather than deep or strong — passionless and calm as a Greek statue. He is a wonderful man, and yet I could *feel* rather than *see* his limitations; and, though he talked so eloquently of "Hakeem in the Return of the Druses," he could never be a "Hakeem" for me — scarcely a "Djabal." And yet, verily, there are moods when it seems an exceedingly pleasant sin to fall down and worship false gods!

Jan. 22d. — I don't know what is the matter here. Some

demoniacal influence pervades our atmosphere, and everything goes wrong. Emilia is capricious as the wind; aunt is haunted by a legion of household evils, which, like John Barleycorn, "rise up again" as soon as I think I have laid them; and I get out of patience, and pray earnestly that I may never be a poor-rich woman.

I have seen Mrs. N——. She is visiting at her uncle, Judge A——'s, and was at the concert to-night — a beautiful woman, of right queenly presence.

Evening of Jan. 22d.—Eureka! Emilia loves H——! I went to her room to-day, and found her in a violent passion. Bridget, the chambermaid, aunt's new "Bridge of Sighs," in dusting Emily's room, had thrown down a paper-weight representing Psyche asleep, and broken it into a dozen pieces. I had often admired the beautiful little gem, and could have wept when I saw it in fragments; but I was surprised at Emilia's flashing eyes and bitter reproaches. As soon as she saw me she burst into tears, and exclaimed,

"I can't help it! See there, Elizabeth!"

The frightened Irish girl took the opportunity to escape, while I sat down to try to comfort Emilia with a vision of all the pretty paper-weights to be had at Kilby & Brown's, and prosed on about the folly of vexing herself thus for a trifle.

She raised her head, — for she had been leaning on my shoulder, — and said, petulantly, shaking back her long curls,

"*Trifles!* That is all you know about it, Miss Lytton." Then, blushing at her rudeness, she said, "Pardon me, Elizabeth, I am really ashamed of myself; but that Psyche was a gift to me, some three years since, from a friend, and I prized it very much, very much, indeed, for its associations. But it is as well thus," she added, with a singular expression of haughty scorn.

So it was the gift of a friend, — a lover, I mused, as I went down stairs; and I was fast weaving out, as is my wont, a web of romance, when I was roused by aunt's voice, asking,

"What *has* that Bridget done, now?"

"Broken Emilia's Psyche!"

"What, poor H——'s gift?"

So, so, I thought; "poor H——" (every one is always "poor" with Aunt Sewal when absent from her) is that "friend." Now for the nature of those cherished associations. Aunt has not a grain of secretiveness, and one or two leading questions drew from her all I wanted to know.

Before H—— went to Europe, he had been quite devoted to his cousin. The families began to look upon their union, at some future time, as quite possible; but just before he left they had quarrelled, and, since his return, though perfectly polite to each other, they have manifested no desire to resume their former relations. Aunt could not say as she was "sorry, — she loved them both as her own children, but they might as well choose somewhere else. She had seen quite enough of marrying cousins in Jane Welmot's case." Something tells me that it will be well with these young friends yet. I rejoice!

Jan. 23d. — A letter to-day from our kind neighbor, Mrs. F——. She says mother has changed very strangely within a week; thinks she has had a slight attack of paralysis, and advises me to come home. I have announced my determination to start to-morrow; but uncle and aunt talk of delay, of "next week," of the necessity of being "calm," and all that. They forget that my mother is all I have on earth.

I have agreed to stay until day after to-morrow, when uncle will go with me as far as New Haven, on his way to New York. O, mother, mother!

Jan. 24th. — I have been to bid good-by to the Lees. I fear I envied them, they were so happy. Mary is at school, thanks to the noiseless kindness of dear Mrs. G——, and the mother and sister showed me her first problems in algebra with a mixture of pride and delight which was really amusing. The little boy did not seem to share in their reverence

for those bits of paper, for he snatched at one of them, and tore it sadly, in his resentment at my considering them more worthy of attention than himself. And, after all, were there not in that little chubby being problems of far greater importance than any which mathematicians have solved — to which those of Newton and La Place are but trifles, save as they elucidate man's capability of approximation towards the Divine?

From the widow's I went to Dr. G——'s. The doctor was fortunately at home, looking over a ponderous "ledger," or "day-book," and humming his favorite song, "A man's a man for a' that."

"True," I cried, as I entered softly, and stole up behind him; "and, save in the person of the writer of those words, never stood text and proof in such close relation, doctor."

"How now, you thief! What business have you to be stealing into a man's house after this fashion? But sit down there, while I go hunt up Lydia Mason; she's been looking for you these two days."

"You may save yourself that trouble, for, if I mistake not, I saw her go into the house of your neighbor, Mrs. L——, as I turned the corner. So prepare yourself to play the agreeable."

"The Lord help us, then!" he cried, with a ludicrous expression of resignation. "I had rather face a case of ship-fever, than a fashionable young lady!"

"And pray what entitles me to that distinction?"

"Look at yourself and answer. Who but fools, — which is but good Saxon for the whole class, — would put velvet and furs enough about their shoulders to rig out the Grand Lama, and leave their feet bare?" and he gave a glance of withering contempt at my beautiful, new gaiters.

"But these are cork soles, and" —

"The devil take the cork soles in such weather as this, fit

only to buoy up witches! Where were your common sense and rubbers when you started?"

"One *minus*, and the other *plus*," I said, laughing. "I did not think the pavement damp, and my rubbers are so large"—

"That they make your feet look larger. Well, you are pretty well off in that line," he went on, grimacing; "but what in Heaven's name do you suppose a sensible man cares about how large a woman's foot is, provided it be not deformed, and she has brains enough in her skull to balance it?"

And so he scolded and joked till Mrs. G—— came, and we had a long talk of my future.

Why is it that I can speak to these people of things upon which my lips are sealed to those of my own blood? Blood! those alone are of our blood who understand us, who help us on the ways of life! God bless ye, true friends! The currents of life are driving us far apart, but my way cannot be wholly dark while I keep the memory of your love!

Passing through Pearl-street, on my way home, I came suddenly upon my old playmate and schoolmate, James B——. He would have avoided me if he could, but I saw his intention and defeated it. He took my outstretched hand, and answered my greeting without raising his eyes. Alas! then, the rumors of his "bad way" are true. The pale face, lustreless eyes, nerveless figure and shambling step, were proof enough.

He seemed to wish to pass on, but I would not be put off. I spoke of old times, — of Annie, his sister, long since among the angels; of his father, mother. Had he seen them of late? No; he had not been in D—— for more than a year. Indeed! Would he not promise to meet me there, week after next, say on Thursday? I intended paying his father and mother a visit as soon as I got home, and should need him there to bring up the "Roxbury russets," as of old. Would n't he promise?

He muttered something of engagements; but I urged my point until he promised.

Will he keep his word? I trust so. He has been the victim of evil influences, but He who gave back without Nain's gates that only son to his mother, is mighty still.

Jan. 26th. — O, it is sad, terrible, to come to one's home, and be welcomed, not by the firm, hard clasp, the dear, loving glances, the warm words of yore, but by trembling hands, a shaking head, and the thick, troubled speech, that indicate the presence of death in life. Mother, mother! How shall I bear this?

Now I must find some words that will soften this hard-hearted creditor, Mr. J——. Yesterday, when I met him, the memory of all his villany, — the years when, as lessee of these few acres, he fleeced us gradually, the hypocrite! until by one bold manœuvre he claimed all, — rose up before me, and choked me. O, mother, would that I had been older then, or you wiser! But your wisdom was never of this earth. Now I will go down on my knees to him, to keep a shelter above your head for the little time that is left you. He *must* be human, — he cannot be more greedy than death!

Shall I try uncle again? No, I can work, not beg. I told him all I could of this, as we came down yesterday, and got for an answer, "Mortgages are ugly things; best get rid of it. Your mother never had any business tact. Better let the place go; I advised it years ago."

Sell the place! It might have been done, and wisely, perhaps, some months ago. But now, when you cling to it so childishly, mother — no!

Jan. 30th. — "'Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days.' You and yours helped me years ago, my child, and now it is my turn;" and, with these words, kind old Widow Dean has installed herself as my mother's nurse. Ay, and I "reap also where I never scattered;" for there are bread, and ham, and cakes, and pies,

sent in by kind and thoughtful hearts, and the miracle of the widow's cruse seems like to be repeated. God reward them!

Feb. 8th.—To-morrow is the day of my appointment with James B——. I regret that I cannot keep it; but it cannot be. I will write and tell him why.

Feb. 10th.—I did go; for when, to please mother, I explained to whom I was writing, and why, two days ago, she insisted on my going; and when I refused fell a weeping, like a petulant child, and complained to Mrs. T——, who happened to come in, that I was undutiful and ungrateful. O, mother, mother, not even death could fall heavier on my heart than these poor, senseless words and tears!

Mrs. T—— advised me to go, saying that it was wisest to keep her quiet,—that she would come in and help Mrs. Dean, if needed. “And you can take old Starface,” added the kind neighbor; “he has not done anything in a week, for father’s laid up with the rheumatiz, and the boys use the colt. He is a little stiff at first, like us old folks; but get him started, and he’ll take you over there like a bird. You have n’t forgot how to drive, I s’pose?”

I accepted the offer, and at sunset was sitting between old Farmer B—— and his wife, talking of old things and new, life and death, and the things which lie beyond; for, as the old man’s eyes have darkened (he has been blind for more than a year, he tells me), he has come to see more and more with the eye of the spirit, which discerneth all things. They said little of James, though I knew he was ever in their thoughts; and I did not tell them of his promise, fearing to raise hopes which might be disappointed. But they told me of their troubles; of the farm,—how it was fast running down,—buildings and fences going to decay for want of an efficient master; and thus the hours ran on till the tall old clock struck nine. I still talked on, until another hour slipped away, and then, sad and disappointed, took the tall

glittering brass candlestick which had been waiting for me the last hour on the stand. There came a knock at the door, and, begging the old lady to let me go, I hurried into the little entry, shutting the door behind me. It was, indeed, James.

When he saw me, his face lighted up, and, taking my hand, he said :

"So you did indeed trust me, Elizabeth!"

"Yes, indeed. Why not?"

"Why not!" in a tone of mingled bitterness and surprise; "do you not know what I am, — a drunkard, a bankrupt, an outcast, a curse to myself and others?"

"The question is, not what you are, but what you *can* be, James. You are a man, still, for you have kept your word with me."

"Perhaps so; but who will believe it?" he said, bitterly.

"I do. There are those in the next room who believe it. Can you doubt *that*? And there is One above, James, — He who seeth not as man seeth, — He believes it. O, beware how you charge upon others the sin of your own unbelief!"

I was excited and nervous, and burst into tears, as I drew him into the next room. I know not well what followed; I heard only the mother's low weeping, and the blind father's broken voice, as he gave thanks for "this my son, which was lost, and is found!"

Again we gathered round the fire; we did not speak of the past, but the russets were brought up, and we talked over the condition of the farm, — every field of which was almost as familiar to me as to James, — the comparative qualities of the "Hudson meadow" and the "clover piece," for spring wheat, the amount of available rail timber in the "over-yonder" woods, and, before I slept, we had run a new fence around the "Juniper lot," and James had rooted out their spreading branches. May he as easily root up his evil habits! But that can hardly be; yet, when I left this morn-

ing, as he placed the reins in my hands, he said, earnestly, "You have treated me as a man,—spoken to me as one, Elizabeth, and you shall see that I will be one." — Ay, with God's help, James.

Feb. 26th. — Another stroke of paralysis, and now my mother knows me no more, — perhaps no more on earth. I heard Mrs. F—— calling to her daughter Mary, a moment ago. My mother will never call me again, never utter my name. This is tasting the bitterness of death!

Feb. 28th. — A letter from Emilia Cranston. How strange and unreal sound her gay words of "balls, and parties, and conquests!" One thing gives me pleasure, as much as this weary heart can feel. Fred. H—— did not go to Europe, only to Cuba, and is now in New York.

March 20th. — All is over! My mother, my *all*, lies pulseless and rigid in the room below. I have sat by her for hours in a kind of dull stupidity, scarcely recognizing anything, feeling anything, but this leaden sense of loss. When will the end come?

March 21st. — Last night I slept, — for the first time in four nights, — a heavy, dreamful, troubled sleep, — a counterpart of the day. Then I rose and went down to the white form, lying so still there beneath the white sheet, — that which was my mother, and yet was not; and for the first time the tears sprang forth — tears for myself, not her. I could recognize the hand of God, but not trust it. O, how dark and lonely looked the way of life! I walked to the window and looked out through my blinding tears. O, how dreary and miserable seemed that prospect which ever before had worn some new phase of beauty, — that long strip of "tidal sand" — the tall, black stakes of the "fishing ponds" — the ravening waves in the foreground, stealing ever in and in, as death had stolen on me — the waste of wild waters backed by a shroud of gray March mist, through which streamed faintly the weak beams of the rising sun.

Suddenly, twittering down upon a bunch of catnip, whose dry stalks rustled beneath the window, came two little brown sparrows. As I watched them, hopping from stalk to stalk, picking at the dried seed-whorls, I remembered His words, "Ye are of more value than many sparrows." Did He send them? O, did He not?—for my heart accepted their teaching, and was comforted.

March 23d.—I have looked my last upon that face; I have seen the dust heaped over the coffin; I comprehend the mournful significance of the old minister's words, when he thanked friends and neighbors for their assistance in "burying our dead from sight."

As I turned away from that grave, now my only heritage, my hand was grasped by blind old Mr. B., who, with James, had come, not merely to pay the last respect to the dead, but to offer to the orphan daughter a home in their house.

I was deeply touched by this kindness, but more by James' words and manner, when he said, timidly, as if his happiness might deepen my grief, that "Emily L—— had forgiven him his errors—that she would be his wife in the spring, and longed to have me come."

For a time I may go to them, but that must not be my "abiding place." A life of action must be mine. I have health and education, and all up and down the great thoroughfares of our land are those waiting to be taught. Somewhere among these I shall find a place, and labor on until I go down to the grave, one of those

"Whom men love not, but yet regret."

March 25th.—"God said, Let there be light, and there was light!" Primordial words; yet have they not a significant relation to the experience of every soul? Thus it hath been with me.

O, the dismantling of our old home; the moving of furniture that seems to have been made to fill just those places,

and none other; the rifling of drawers, and the desecration of even friendly hands touching the cherished relics of the dead! But it must be borne, that Mr. J—— may have his “bond.” He had kept his promise, and I should mine.

After seeing the few relics I had selected sent off to Mr. F——’s, who had kindly offered me a home, I begged his wife to leave me to pass the last few hours of daylight alone.

O, those hours! too painful for me to recall. The wild tumult of recollections that coursed through my mind, as I wandered from room to room, each one growing dearer and dearer, until, in the gathering darkness, with a blessing on the threshold, I crossed it, never to return.

The daffodils, planted years ago by hands now still in the grave, were out, and I gathered a handful, and stood leaning over the gate,—how well I remembered the time when I was obliged to stand on tip-toe to reach the latch!—looking up to the leafless boughs of the maples, upon which the pale sunlight still lingered.

O, those trees! They were rooted in my heart; they had mingled their low, slumberous music with my mother’s songs above my cradle, murmured solemn responses to my evening prayers, shaded my childish sports, my happy maiden dreamings; and was it not meet that they should be leafless, now that my path was all shadow? Then I remembered my father, as he lay in his open coffin beneath them, while friends and neighbors crowded around to take a last look; I recalled the very play of the shadows on his pale face, as they lifted me up to kiss his cheek; and, resting my head upon the gate, I wept with the convulsive bitterness of a child. How long I knew not; I was conscious of nothing, until a deep, manly voice at my side said, “Elizabeth!”

I did not see the face—scarcely the arms that were held out to me; but the next moment I was folded close within their embrace. What were earthly houses, homes, lands to

me then, when I knew the strong heart beneath my head would shelter me forever?

Winding his arms closer and closer about me, as one cradles a weary child, he let me weep on, until my grief spent itself in long-drawn sobs. Then, raising my head, and drawing my arm through his, he said, "That will do, Elizabeth; you are getting cold."

I moved on at once. When did I ever dream of opposing that tone, so quiet, yet so resistless? I did not even ask how he came there; it was enough that it was so. Nor did he tell; but instinctively divining, as it seemed, that my way lay towards Mr. F——'s, he walked on quietly, speaking of the shows of country life. But, when within a few yards of the door, he paused, and, taking both my hands in his, said earnestly, "Elizabeth, you have suffered excitement enough for one day, and too much; but, before we part to-night, it is fitting and right that I should ask and you should answer one question.

"I love you, Elizabeth. Tell me, is it as I hope? does your heart fully respond to mine? will it trust me forever?"

He had put me from him, and stood looking down into my eyes with that deep questioning gaze of his. For a moment I could not speak.

"Elizabeth, my pupil!"

"My master, my all!" and then he gathered me to his breast; his lips met mine, and the garnered love of years was poured out in that kiss.

Suddenly loosing me from his embrace, he said, "This is wrong; you are faint and weary, poor child. I have much to say, but my words must wait until to-morrow. Let me come to you, say at nine in the morning, and, in the mean time, please make such temporary arrangements as you wish, for we must be in New Haven to-morrow night."

"We! so soon? What for?" I asked in a breath.

"O, for several reasons," he said, smiling that old quiet

smile ; “ the strongest, perhaps, because I have busied myself in arranging a home there, which refuses to seem home until a certain treasure is there.”

“ But — but ” —

“ O, you know, of old, that I never entertain ‘ buts !’ You have promised to trust me for the future, and I mean henceforth that the trust shall be no sinecure. There, now promise me you will go in and go to sleep ; promise, my darling.”

My darling ! Are there sweeter words in our mother tongue ? I promised, but how can I sleep ? There are nights enough to come, in which to sleep ; but these emotions — they come but once in a lifetime ; there may be others, deeper, richer, more intense, but these come never again ! His darling !

New Haven, April 10th. — He came that morning, and, after some explanatory chat with dear Mrs. F——, I went up stairs, at his suggestion, to put on my travelling-dress, in order to take a short walk before the carriage came, which was to take us to the city. When I came down, T—— was still talking earnestly with Mrs. F——, who inspected my dress closely (it was the pretty travelling-dress I had in H——), pulled a plait here and another there, and seemed altogether nervous and excited, a thing very unusual for her.

We walked on, talking of the past, calling up the days of my pupilage, and the words and glances which had at once said so much and so little, until we stood by my mother’s grave, silently, a few moments ; then he said, “ We are both orphans, and both free, — free to act as we choose, — are we not, Elizabeth ? ”

And I answered, “ Yes.”

“ Then go with me.”

I did not hesitate, though I apprehended his meaning, when he drew my arm through his, and led me into the church, where were gathered the old minister, Mr. and Mrs. F——, and a few of the old neighbors. In a few moments we had

ratified before the world the vows of our hearts, and turned to meet the congratulations of the few friends. T—— spoke for me, kindly and gently thanking them for all their kindness; and then, in his quiet way, stepped past them, and placed me in the carriage waiting at the door.

"My wife, my own wife!" he whispered, as he took his seat by my side.

Ah, then I saw my mistake! Then I knew that there were sweeter words than those of the evening before; but, surely, none in earth or heaven that can equal these!

Now we are at home, a pleasant home, ay, and a rich one, for it contains two happy human hearts. I have been too happy to ask an explanation of the past as yet. But that Mrs. N——; I'll ask him about her when he lays down that paper.

"Harold, how was it about that Mrs. N——? Come, explain."

"Yes, darling, when you please to enlighten me about that Mr. H——."

"O, you quibbling lawyer! why don't you tell a straight story, and say you were completely fascinated?"

"Because no man is obliged to criminate himself, especially when he is not guilty."

"But was n't you a little — well, interested in her at one time?"

"No, if, by interested, you mean anything more than mere acquaintance. Surely, you do not believe it?" and he came round to a seat on the sofa, by my side.

"No, indeed; but what was there about it? The interest was on her side, then, was it not?"

"I thought I taught you long ago not to ask impertinent questions. Now it's my turn to catechize. Why did n't you marry young H——?"

"Because I did not love him well enough. But who told you he offered himself?"

"No one; I inferred it from some things. Besides, I was given to understand that it was a settled thing."

"Indeed! by whom?"

"Your aunt, for one."

"And you believed it?"

"Yes."

"Well, I must confess my opinion of your penetration is lessened perceptibly."

"Very likely; a not unusual experience with married ladies, I believe. But, Bessie," — he went on, prisoning my hands in his, and speaking gravely, — "you ought not to regret it, for it taught me the best lesson I ever learned — how dear you were to my heart. I hoped that the absurd rumor about Mrs. N—— would do as much for you; but it seems you defended her like a true knight-errant."

"No, no, Harold; say rather it was a proud woman's expiation for giving, as she thought, her heart unsought."

"My poor Bessie," he said, thoughtfully, raising my head from his breast, "you must have suffered."

"I did; but tell me, you have seen Dr. G——?"

"Yes; or I should not have you sitting by my side, my wife — the dearest sight a man can see on earth; at least, not until long years, perhaps of trial, had taught me the truth."

"And he told you that I" —

"No, he said no such thing. But he called himself and me all manner of hard names, and ordered me to come right down to M——, 'an' I loved him.' Moreover he told me Mr. H—— is to marry his cousin, Miss Emilia Cranston."

"Good!" I exclaimed; and then, sparing H—— as much as possible, I told him all the story of my stay at uncle's — all my trials, struggles and temptations; and he, my noble husband, he understood them all, and pointed out to me their uses; how they had widened and deepened my sympathies with humanity, made me stronger and wiser for the battle of life, until I could only weep happy tears.

Then I showed all my weakness, my want of faith ; but he
only answered, drawing me closer to him,

“ My bride, my wife, my life !

Lay thy sweet hands in mine, and trust to me.”

LOVE'S LABOR NOT LOST.

“ Face and figure of a child,
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

“ And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even, smileth stilly,
Just as *you* would at a lily.”

PART I.

IN the door-way of one of those old, dilapidated, densely populated houses that abound in the great city of New York, sat a pale, delicate-looking child. It was a narrow, dark street, leading down to the river, lined with forlorn, mouldy-looking old houses, leaning against each other for support, and from which divers loose boards and timbers hung creaking in the wind, ever giving warning that they were about to fall. The air in this street was a strange combination of odors arising from the culinary preparations going on in the over-crowded dwellings, varied occasionally by a strong smell of tar, burned oakum, and bilge water, with which the breeze from the river was laden. In short, it was anything but the pure, fresh air of heaven, which God gave as the element of life. Yet, on the evening of which we speak, the mellow beams of the setting sun, which, like the earnest soul, are ever seeking something beautiful under the most untoward appearances, came peering round corners and through between tumbling-down old chimneys, bringing out in strong relief the grotesque mouldings on the old casements and cornices, peep-

ing beneath the crushed-looking bonnets of toilworn mothers returning from their labor, and bathing as in a stream of golden water the heads of numberless little white-haired children, as they rushed forth to meet their parents, or played upon the pavement. One strong sunbeam, like an angel of mercy, had spied the pale child in that gloomy door-way, and, creeping from roof to roof, at length fell upon the dwelling above her, then sliding down slowly and silently, like all sweet, holy influences, rested upon her head, and lit up her meek, pale face with a glow which was very beautiful to behold.

A glad light sprang to her eyes, a faint smile broke round her mouth, as she felt its warmth upon her forehead; for a moment she watched the motes dancing in its golden light; then her gaze was directed, as before, earnestly up the street. As she sat thus, the pavements began to echo to the heavier footsteps of men returning from their work, and there was a confused murmur of tongues, — Irish, English, French and German. But the loudest-toned among them instinctively lowered his voice as he caught a glimpse of that child sitting in the sunlight, and not a few of those hard, care-worn faces greeted her with a kindly smile. One fat, motherly-looking Irish woman paused beside her, and, taking a small bouquet of the commonest of garden flowers from among the mass of articles that crowded the basket on her arm, placed it in the child's hand, saying:

“May be ye would like that, me darlint.”

“O, thank you, thank you!” exclaimed the child, raising her eyes, gushing with delighted surprise. “It is so long since I have seen a flower. You are so very kind.”

“An' who would n't be kind to ye, aroon, wid the angel looking out of yer eyes, so like the one that once slept on my own breast, and is now wid the blissed virgin in heaven?” said the Irish mother, crossing herself, and pressing her hard hand to her bosom with a mournful gesture, as she passed on.

To most of my readers, whose lives have been set round and garlanded with those autographs of the Divinity, — the blessed flowers, — it will be difficult to describe the intense joy, the loving tenderness, with which that little girl gazed on those humble flowers, and pressed them to her lips and eyes; or what a chain of associations they awoke in her young mind, which reached from earth to heaven. It seemed that these were not all of joy, for the glow of delight which had lit up her face faded slowly away, and in its place came a look of patient sorrow — a sorrow that gave to her features the thoughtfulness of mature years.

As she sat, thus busy with memory, a boy, of some eight years, came rapidly down the street, and, seeing that she did not observe him, crept stealthily along in the deep shadow of the old walls, until he stood behind her unperceived, and, clapping his little brown hands with delight as he stooped to kiss her, exclaimed :

“Caught, fairly caught asleep once, Susie !”

The little girl smiled, and, holding up her flowers, said :

“See, Willie, are they not beautiful ?”

Then, in reply to his words of admiration and inquiry, she went on to tell, out of the gratitude of her heart, of the kindness of the world in general, and the fat Irish woman in particular, as manifested toward her; then, returning to the flowers, she said :

“Look here, Willie; those two and that blue one are just like the flowers that grew in our garden at Woburn. Do you remember the violets and blue periwinkle each side of the gate, and the clump of lilacs at the end of the alley, and — but no, you were too small when we left to remember. Dear Woburn !” she added, sadly, as if touched by some mournful recollection.

“Not the flowers, Susie, though I love them well enough for their own sakes as well as for yours; but I do remember Dr. Murdock’s big dog, Painter, and how he used to let me ride

on his back. But don't be sad, Susie," he continued, noticing the shade on her face with the quick eye of affection; "when I get to be a man, which will be before a thousand years," and he fairly rose two inches in his — shoes, we were about to say, but cannot, seeing that his feet were bare, — in his desire to convince her of the speedy fulfilment of his words, "we will have another cottage, just like the one at Woburn, with a garden and lots of flowers; for, though I don't remember much about it, you can tell me, and you shall have a little room to yourself, with plants in it as big as trees, if you like."

She drew him down beside her, and, passing her hand lovingly over his mass of brown hair, said, with a smile:

"You are the best and kindest brother in the whole world, Willie."

"And who would n't be kind to you, Susie?" he replied, unconsciously repeating the words of the Irish mother; "I could not be otherwise if I tried. But come, let us go into the house and see mother."

"Mother has gone to carry home the clothes she has been washing," said Susie, as she turned to reach behind her for something within the door.

"Never mind, Susie," said her brother, laying his hand on her arm, "let me be your crutch to-night. I will be very steady, indeed I will."

She smiled, and, as he carefully assisted her to rise, it was easy to see why she, so small and childish-looking herself, should have spoken to that well-developed boy of her older memory.

Her face, with its thoughtful look of patient sorrow, might have been taken, as it was, in truth, for the face of a girl of twelve summers, but her lower limbs were small even to deformity, and one hip much drawn from its place.

As they turned from the door, she cast another anxious

glance up the street, then her eyes sought her brother's face with a look of sorrowful inquiry.

The boy understood the glance, for he replied, sadly :

"I fear he will not come to-night, Susie."

"Why not? Have you seen him?" she asked, eagerly.

"He came as far as the corner of —— street with me; there he met some boys, who persuaded him to go into a ten-pin alley," he replied, as he slowly guided his sister's steps along the gloomy old passage that led to their room.

However mean and poor the room which afforded shelter to Widow Danvers and her children, however bare of even the common necessities of life, however harsh and discordant the sounds which reached it from the crowded rooms around, there was that in the hearts and on the faces of those children, as they emerged from that dark passage, that gave to its atmosphere a light and a glory which wealth could not buy.

Willie began to bring forth their scanty supper, meanwhile telling his sister all about the great green parrot, whose gilded cage had for several days been hung from a window opposite his employer's store (for Willie was an errand boy); of its climbing, and whistling, and mocking the cries of the newspaper venders; while occasionally the noise of Susie's crutches mingled with the chattering of their tongues, as she assisted him in searching for something, which they were at last forced to remember had been all eaten at the previous meal.

They had hardly finished placing and replacing the coarse dishes, with their scanty contents, upon the table, with the childish wish to make them show to the best advantage, and thus cheat themselves into a belief of a sufficiency, when their mother entered from her weary walk.

By healthy, happy children, bred in the midst of plenty and comfort, she might have been taken for a spectre, so wan and ghostlike did she look, with that strange, unearthly light

in her large, dark eyes. But these children, familiar with misery, saw nothing in that face but the radiance of a mother's love, and, in her shortened respiration and the quick throbbing of her heart, as she pressed their young hands to her bosom and sank upon a chair, nothing but evidences of her joy at seeing them again. True, little Susie, with her premature development, born of pain and sorrow, had once or twice of late felt a shudder pass over her, as if the shadow of the wing of the death-angel rested upon her, when she looked in her mother's face and noted her failing steps; but she had shrunk from it, and thrust it away from her, as if such a fearful thought questioned the goodness of God. Childhood is so slow to apprehend death.

While the weary mother listened to the murmuring voices of the children, another form emerged from the darkness of the passage; but—whether its gloom still clung to him from affinity, or whether it was owing to the atmosphere of evil which for many months had been gathering round his heart, we cannot say—a dark cloud rested upon his handsome, boyish features, and gave to them a bitter, disagreeable expression. And it seemed that neither the glad welcome of the children, nor the more gentle one of the mother, had power to chase it away; for he threw himself moodily upon a chair, and deigned no reply to their kind and loving words.

"I fear you are not well, to-night, George," said the mother, approaching and laying her thin, bony fingers upon his wrist.

He drew his arm hastily away, saying:

"Well! I don't know what any one should wish to be well for. The sooner one dies and is out of the way the better."

"But, my dear child"—

"Ah, yes! I know all that you would say," he interrupted, with a gesture of impatience. "I know all that *cant* about God's wisdom, and goodness, and providence, and discipline,

and all that. It is a part of God's wisdom, I suppose, that allows one man to cheat another out of all he has, — a part of his providential discipline that we and thousands like us must drudge, drudge night and day, and starve at that, — a part of his boasted goodness," he went on bitterly, casting a glance at little Susie, "that brings children into this world only to suffer, to drag through life a burden to themselves and others. Better die at once; or, better still, never to have been born."

Little Susie, who had managed to get close to his side, and lay her thin hand upon his shoulder, drew in her breath, as if a sharp pain passed through her, and, creeping away, seated herself in the shadow of the door, for she would not that they should see the tears that gathered in her eyes.

"A burden to herself and others!" God only knows how deeply those bitter words pierced her heart. They were not new to her. Careless, thoughtless people had repeated them in whispers to each other, as they gazed on her wasted limbs, — whispers which she did not fail to catch and translate into words; and lips, which should have opened only to bless and pity her, had uttered them again and again in tones of querulous complaint; yet custom had not dulled their point, or taken from them aught of their bitterness. They brought a cloud before her eyes and heart, so dark and thick, that it cost the child many a weary struggle before she could again see and gather up the scattered sunbeams that came to brighten even her forlorn way.

PART II.

"Thank God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for."

Susie Danvers had spoken of her early home at Woburn, and in the midst of a life of pain and poverty her heart

guarded the memory of the hours passed there like a holy thing; and since error and sin had driven them from its shelter, and, like the Angel of Wrath at the gates of Eden, barred the entrance, she had bathed it in the light of a pure and loving nature, until,

“Of all the beautiful pictures
That hang in Memory’s hall,”

this seemed dearest, brightest and best.

Her father had been the village physician, and, though a man of hasty, impulsive disposition, was generally much respected and beloved. His wife’s rich, genial nature was like sunshine and dew to all who came within her influence. There was one object towards which she felt drawn with more than a woman’s instinctive fondness. This was to little George, her husband’s child by a former marriage; but, unfortunately for both the mother and the child, the strong prejudices of his mother’s family were brought to bear against her, and the child at length withdrawn from her care for months together.

Still, her heart followed him with loving thoughts, and when God filled up the measure of her cup of happiness by sending her own little Susie, she did not selfishly forget the motherless boy, but her thoughts turned to him with even more tenderness than before; and the first word the little girl was taught to utter was the name of her brother. During the short visits which he made at his father’s house, the boy could not, in spite of the power of prejudice, resist her gentle influence; and, as he listened to her sweet tones, and looked into her soft, dark eyes, his thoughts grew troubled, and he wondered how it *could* be that one so kind and gentle should be so thoroughly selfish as he had been taught to believe her. The longest of these visits was made just at the time when little Susie was recovering from the terrible illness that had left her a cripple for life. The little girl was delighted with his company; besides, she was so gentle and patient in her

helplessness, that he could not help feeling drawn towards her, and he soon cast off his rough habits, and learned to speak softly and step lightly as his mother herself; and when she was, at length, permitted to go out in her little carriage, and he saw her wholly committed to his care, he was delighted with the responsibility. He felt that he was *trusted* for the first time in his life; for the cold, suspicious temper of his aunts, and their harsh judgments, were ill calculated to foster in the mind of childhood either confidence or self-respect; and not unfrequently, in after years, when yielding to the evil influences around him, his heart recalled these brief weeks of his childhood with bitter regret. When Susie was about eight years old, Dr. Danvers became security for a distant relative of his wife, to the amount of several thousand dollars. This person soon became a bankrupt, and involved the doctor in his ruin. This unfortunate affair filled up the measure of Mrs. Danvers' unpopularity with his first wife's relations; for, though she had not failed to remonstrate gently and calmly with her husband, at the time, on the propriety of thus risking his all, the whole blame of the affair was thrown upon her, chiefly because she refused to join in the bitter reproaches with which they chafed his impatient, irritable spirit. Though intelligent, genial and generous, Dr. Danvers possessed but little independence of character. He lacked energy to meet his difficulties, and the moral courage to face his changed circumstances. He was one of those natures "too proud to dig, and ashamed to beg;" therefore, notwithstanding the words of cheer and encouragement he received from his wife, he soon yielded to despair. Well would it have been if this had been all! But, like many another proud, disappointed man, he sought forgetfulness in the wine-cup, and in a short time all traces of the generous spirit of his youth were effaced by the rapid encroachment of the demon intemperance.

Supported by strength which cometh not from earthly aid,

his gentle wife saw the sure but gradual ruin of her dearest earthly hopes; saw the quiet home in which her nature had passed by such pleasant steps from timid, bashful girlhood into the full life of ripened womanhood, pass into the hands of strangers; and with her husband, — whose temper grew more and more irritable and exacting as his health yielded to his evil habits, — and her children, found refuge in the crowded purlieus of the city. We have said “children,” for, soon after the failure, the marriage of one aunt and the death of another had consigned George again to his father’s care, and, some four years previously, little Willie had been added to their joys and cares.

George’s character was much more marked and decided, even at that early age, than his father’s. His passions and prejudices were very strong, and the course of training to which he had been subjected in his grandmother’s house had not tended to restrain them, while it had succeeded in tinging all that was genial and generous in his nature with distrust and suspicion. He had been taught to recognize the law of Fear, but not of Love. His own property, inherited from his mother, had been lost in the general wreck; and so deeply had it been instilled into him that this loss was in some way the result of his father’s second marriage, that the spirit in which he returned to share their poverty was little calculated to add to the peace or comfort of the ruined household. The selfishness of the father — who, in his degradation, did not hesitate to indulge his own appetites at the expense of his family — and his fretful, unreasonable temper, chafed and embittered the quick, impetuous spirit of the boy to such a degree, that anger and contention were soon added to the many miseries of their miserable home. Notwithstanding his strong prejudice, the boy had not been with them many weeks, before he felt compelled to admire the unwearied patience and goodness of his mother; yet, instead of being drawn to follow her example, his feeling of admiration often changed into one of

angry contempt that she could so tamely submit to the imperious, unreasonable exactions of his father. At such times, with a recklessness strange to himself, he would join his father in ridiculing her unshaken faith in the goodness of God ; and the infirmities of little Susie formed a never-failing illustration on this point ; for so rapidly had the demon gained upon the man, that the father had already learned to look upon his suffering child as a burden and a trouble,—a care that deprived him of the undivided attention of his wife, and an expense that curtailed him in many of the indulgences of his former life, which, in his utter selfishness, he did not hesitate to exact from the labor of his wife and children. In his inmost heart the boy often bitterly regretted yielding to this dark spirit ; and, though he was too proud to manifest it in words, he would often take up the little girl on his knee, and, while bending his head to meet her caresses, talk to her of their early days at Woburn, until her pale face grew radiant with delight. But beyond the walls of that humble room he found little to strengthen these faint struggles of the better spirit within him, but much — O, how much ! — to tempt him on to sin and crime. Soon after their arrival in the city, his father had apprenticed him to a shoemaker, in spite of his strong repugnance to the occupation, and earnest entreaties to be permitted to seek some other mode of living. At the time of his father's death, which happened some two years after, he left his employer, and, joining a gang of reckless boys like himself, subsisted, his mother knew not how, for his visits home grew more and more rare, and his mood more and more impatient and irritable. Even the kind greetings and loving words which ever awaited him in that humble home seemed a reproach to the unhappy boy, and sometimes he would cease to visit them for months.

It would seem strange to one unacquainted with the mysteries of the human heart, that deep, unswerving love of little Susie Danvers for this erring brother ; but sometimes — and

many of us have reason to thank God it is so — the foibles faults, ay, even the sins of those dear to us, draw from us a double share of that love they so much need. And so it was that this moody, wayward brother seemed to possess even a stronger, tenderer claim upon her heart than the joyous Willie.

George had early manifested a passionate love of music, and possessed a voice of rare purity and compass. During his visits at Woburn he beguiled many of her slow hours of suffering with his endless songs, and took great pleasure in teaching her to accompany him. To the gay and happy, music is a resource, an accomplishment, a pleasant amusement; but to the poor it is one of the greatest of God's blessings — the true Lethe of their existence, in which they can forget for a few brief hours all the troubles that beset them. At least so thought Susie Danvers, and so thought, in all probability, the white-haired, stooping-shouldered old German, who lived in a gloomy-looking house on the opposite side of the square. What was poverty to him, when, as evening drew on, he exchanged the implements of toil for his beloved violin, and, seating himself at the open window, poured forth the glorious strains of the masters of his native land!

Ah! the song of Orpheus is no fable, as that old man well knew, for the time-stained walls of his dwelling slowly receded, and the magic tones led him gently back on the track of his youth, until he sat once more beneath the vine-covered trellises of Andernach, with the soft eyes of his Gretchen looking into his, while her sweet voice blended with that of his beloved Cremona, — gentle eyes, upon which the green sod in the quiet church-yard of Altenkirchen had pressed for so many years! And that, too, was a pleasant thought, and there was wisdom and piety in it, which led the old man, when his troop of flaxen-haired grandchildren gathered about his knees, and mingled their young voices with his, to play

those songs which she had loved best; for he *felt* that her voice, though undistinguishable to mortal ears, did not fail to accompany them. We hear much about evil being contagious; but we believe good is not the less so; for the happiness of that poor German family, their strong affection for each other, bursting forth at eve in rich melodies, seemed to breathe a benediction upon that miserable neighborhood; and to no one heart did it bring such a wealth of blessing as to that of the suffering Susie Danvers.

“Let me sit longer, dear mother—the music eases this wearisome pain in my hip,” she was accustomed to say, when her mother spoke to her of the necessity of retiring; and thus night after night found her seated in the old door-way, watching the happy faces of the children, as they clustered around the old man’s chair, by the open window, until in the gathering darkness she could not distinguish one face from another, and catching with her quick, unerring ear every note of their music, until the glorious strains of Beethoven, Handel, and Bach, were as familiar to her as her cradle hymns. Presently she began to accompany them, but very lowly, fearing, in her timidity and bashfulness, that they would be offended at her presumption, should they hear her. And this new pleasure brought another, that helped to while away the wearisome pain in her limbs—the thought of George’s surprise and pleasure when he became aware of her progress; and O, how anxiously, how impatiently, did she watch for him to come home! for somehow she had got the impression that she could win him to remain there, with those glorious strains.

Once, in the interval of many weeks, he had made his appearance among them, but so irritable and moody that she did not even dare to mention to him her unconscious teachers, the Germans; but, after his departure, she reproached herself bitterly for her cowardice, thinking that she might have wronged him—that perhaps, after all, he was not so ill humored as he seemed; and if she had only struck a few

notes of one of Beethoven's symphonies, she might have completely exorcised the evil spirit.

In the light of this hope she had watched for him on the evening of which we have spoken. We have seen their meeting. We know how those bitter words, "a burden to herself and others," had darkened that light, and how she shrunk away in the darkness, with all the old pain in her limbs and heart, fearful that even her tears would reproach him.

PART III.

"And all voices that address her,
Softens, sleecken, every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'
Ay, and certes, in good sooth,
We may all be sure HE DOTR."

"Sorrow, there seemeth more of thee in life
Than we can bear and live."

And yet Widow Danvers *did live*, though God alone knows the crushing weight of the blow, when strange hands brought in her bright-eyed little Willie, and laid him down before her, a mangled corpse. And poor little Susie—it seemed as if that heavy wall, in crushing him, had stunned her also, so mute and motionless did she sit gazing for hours upon the dead child's face. Then there were heavy footsteps in that dark passage, and the children of the neighborhood hung round the door, and gazed shyly and curiously at the little rough coffin that was borne away to the Potter's Field, and placed beneath its scanty covering of earth. And well it was that Susie's lameness, and the mother's failing strength, prevented them following to his grave; for thus they were happily spared a knowledge of the revolting features of the crowded burial-places of the poor. And when they thought of little Willie's grave, memory recalled the green grave-yard

of Woburn, with its flower-starred turf and mossy wall, and it comforted their hearts to think that he slept in some such quiet place. This thought of her boy's last home grew very dear to the widow's heart, in proportion as the love which she had borne him seemed to be drawing her slowly and surely to lie down by his side. Of her dead child she could truly say, "It is well!" but of the living, — the suffering and the erring, — there came hours in which even her strong faith in God was not sufficient to face the thought of leaving them; hours which we will not attempt to describe, for none but a mother's heart could sound their depths of misery. But as her footsteps drew nearer and nearer the spirit-land, a ray of its blessed light seemed to fall upon her troubled heart, and hush it to rest. An orphan herself, she had no relations nearer than cousins; to these she wrote, confiding both her children to their care, and, relying much upon the promise of the kind Irishwoman (who, won by little Susie's resemblance to her lost darling, had sought them out, and proved her friendship by many a self-denying deed), that the little girl should not suffer as long as a crust or a potato was to be shared in her own family, she laid aside the needle, which her trembling fingers could no longer hold, and awaited her release. One thought only seemed to weigh upon her mind — George and his future fate. Months had elapsed since his footsteps had crossed their threshold, and it seemed as if the hope of seeing him once more had kept alive the flickering flame of life through the dreary days of winter. But day after day passed, and she could only watch and pray. She knew not that through her death he was to be quickened into spiritual life.

"Susie," said the mother, one night, after refusing a neighbor's offer to pass the night by her, "draw aside that curtain, dear, and let the moonlight into the room. It seems as if there had been neither moonlight nor sunlight in this dreary city, and I would fain look on it once more."

"Mother!" said the child, anxiously.

"Don't be anxious, my child. I feel no worse to-night, and I did wrong to speak in that impatient tone; but I was thinking of the moonlight at Woburn. Help me to move my pillow a little, darling, and then sing. It will, as you often say, ease this wearisome pain in my side."

The child arranged the pillows, and was about to place her stool close by her mother's side, when the latter, pointing to a spot where the moonlight slept on the floor, said,

"Not here, my child, but in the moonlight yonder. I can see your face better there."

Susie obeyed, and, with her bird-like tones, subdued and deepened by emotion, began Schubert's "Ave Maria." As those plaintive notes, so full of tearful, earnest entreaty, fell upon the mother's heart, she cast one long, loving glance at the childish figure sitting in the moonlight; then, closing her eyes as if in sleep, her soul passed with that beautiful melody from earth to heaven.

But the child knew it not. The narrow strip of moonlight crept stealthily nearer and nearer the wall, as if conscious of the presence of the shadowy terror there; but the singer still continued to breathe forth those touching notes of supplication for that aid and protection she now so much needed. The moonlight stole quite away, and in the gathering darkness she did not see the boyish figure that stood in that dark old doorway, nor the expression of delighted surprise that lit up his face as he listened to her tones. She did not hear his low step as he stole across the floor, nor see the startled look of horror and remorse that crossed his face, as the pale, ghastly features of his mother met his gaze. But his exclamation of surprise aroused her, and she drew near to his side.

"O! mother, mother!" he groaned, taking the child's hand in his, and laying it upon that pale, cold forehead. That fearful chill was not to be mistaken. It seemed to strike to the child's heart. She sunk down by her brother's side, and,

forgetting everything but her need of love hid her face in his bosom. He drew her closely to him, while he repeated, in that same broken tone, "O! mother, mother, have I killed you at last?"

"She blessed you — only a few moments since she blessed you, George, and bade me say that, if she had failed to make you feel how truly she had loved you, as she feared she had, you must forgive her," said Susie, raising her head from its new-found resting-place.

Again that smothered cry, "O! mother, mother!" so full of anguish and remorse, burst from the boy's lips, while the child went on, in a voice broken and full of tears:

"And she told me not to grieve too bitterly, if I was left alone, dear George; for that you would come back, and love me, even as she had loved me; that you would be mother and brother to me."

"And, by the help of God, I will!" exclaimed the boy, earnestly. "Mother, I promise!" he continued, rising to his feet, and kissing the high, pale forehead of the dead.

Through the long watches of that night the overwearyed Susie slept calmly near her dead mother's side, while George sat by, nursing high resolves and earnest purposes; resolves and purposes which he carried out, not without many a severe struggle, and now and then a fall; for the power of temptation from *without* and *within* was *very* strong. But an angel, in the shape of a feeble child, with soft, clear eyes, and a glorious voice, walked ever before him on the upward path, and drew him after, by the strong cords of love, until, in spite of the weakness of his own heart and the sneers of his old companions in evil, he triumphed. The kind voices of his neighbors bade him "God-speed," for his mother's sake, and not a few hard, toil-worn hands were put forth to aid both him and Susie. Among these none were more true and friendly than those of old Heinrich Müller and his family, to whom they had been made known through the watchful kind-

ness and unwearied tongue of their Irish friend, Biddy McGee. Their voices were a sufficient passport to the old man's favor, aside from their story; but when George told them, without disguise, all his past career of error and sin, they did not turn away from him, but all heartily assented to the white-haired grandfather's remark, "If he has sinned, my children, then there is so much the more reason why we should treat him with kindness." Through their exertions, George found a place much to his mind in a large piano manufactory; and, as for little Susie, she soon made herself a home in their hearts, and became completely domiciled beneath their roof.

"Why speak of *das Geld*, my son?" the good mother Lottchen was accustomed to say, whenever George laid before her his scanty earnings. "Is not her gentle temper, and the sight of her sweet, calm face, worth more than ten dollars a week to a laboring woman like me, troubled with many things? Look at her, yonder; see how quiet and good the little ones are when with her."

Several years have passed, and few who read our story would recognize, in the junior partner of the fashionable music-store of Messrs. — and Co., Broadway, New York, the reckless George Danvers, the "gallows-bird," as his old master, the shoemaker, was wont to term him.

But, should they manifest anything like a true love of music, he might, in his enthusiasm, lead them to the neat parlor adjoining the store, and, in the slight, fragile figure, and clear, *spirituelle* eyes of her who wakes such a world of melody from the piano before her, they might recognize many traces of the deformed child who was wont to sit in that gloomy door-way; and in the tenderness with which the brother hangs over her and watches her every movement, they will find the surest proof that she, who was "born to be only a burden to herself and others," has, through the power of love, grown to be the richest blessing of his life.

A TALE OF THE COLONY TIMES.

“ In the good old Colony times,
When we lived under the King.”

CHAPTER I.

EVEN to this day the inhabitants of New England seldom speak of the tyrannical measures of the British government toward the colonies, during the reign of George III., without some show of indignation. Yet any one familiar with their history cannot fail to see that, under the preceding reigns, they had often suffered from far greater wrongs than those illegal taxes that struck the key-note to the revolution.

This was especially true of New Hampshire, under the first royal governors. Mason, the grandson of the famous Captain John, of Pequod memory, had, in asserting his claims to his grandfather's grant, succeeded in separating the colony from Massachusetts, under whose jurisdiction the first settlement had been made. In this he was aided by his relative, Edward Randolph, that “blasted wretch,” as one of our old historians terms him, who crossed the Atlantic no less than eight times in nine years, in his indefatigable zeal to procure the downfall of our charter government, in which mischievous errand he but too well succeeded.

A President and Council were appointed, by his Majesty Charles II., for the government of the province; and, as the separation had been in direct opposition to the wishes of the people, he shrewdly nominated several of the most distin-

guished gentlemen in the colony to the first Council. They were men who had held high offices, both civil and military, under the colonial government, and nothing but the unavoidable necessity of submitting to this change, and the fear that, in case of their refusal, others, less true to the interests of the people, would be substituted, induced them to accept the nomination. Their acceptance was a sore disappointment to Mason and his coadjutors. After striving for some months to intimidate or cajole them into furthering their selfish and ambitious ends, Mason returned to England, where he so completely gained the ear of the voluptuous monarch, that the form of government was once more changed, and Edward Cranfield appointed royal governor.

His commission, which bears the date of May 9th, 1681, gave him almost absolute power, and he was a man little calculated, either by nature or education, to neglect any of the prerogatives of his office. A stanch royalist, a devoted adherent to the forms of the established church, he had little sympathy with the thoughts, ends and aims, of that singular people whom he came to govern, and his strong prejudices and arrogant manners were ill calculated to win either their love or respect.

He was empowered to appoint all general officers, and to suspend such members of the Council as gave him just cause of offence, they being, at the same time, declared not eligible to the General Assembly, the only body elected by the people. It was not long, therefore, before he saw himself supported by a Council wholly subservient to his will.

But the members of the Assembly were sternly true to their trust; and, convoking them twice, and finding them as resolute and firm in maintaining their rights as had been their sires and brothers in the reign of Charles I., like that unhappy monarch, at whose court his early youth had been spent, and whom he seemed to take for his model, he suddenly dismissed them, and, with his Council, assumed the

whole of the legislative power, taxing the people without their consent, and fining and imprisoning such as dared to complain of injustice.

This tyrannical conduct bore heavily upon the inhabitants of Portsmouth and its vicinity. Fifty years had elapsed since the so-called company of "Laconia," headed by Mason and Gorges, had raised the first rude hut near the mouth of the pleasant Piscataqua, yet the inhabitants had lost none of the peculiar traits that distinguished the puritan character. Their patient perseverance, their quaint garb and godly modes of speech, and their unshaken confidence in an overruling Providence and his blessing on their cause, were worthy even of the "Mayflower."

Indeed, there were still living in their midst gray-headed old men, who remembered well the falling of the first tree, and the site of the first hut; men who could tell fearful tales of the wanderings of the company through the pathless forest in search of the gleaming river, and who remembered, also, that discreet and godly man, Francis Williams, the first colonial governor, and did not fail to contrast, in no silken phrases, the arbitrary proceedings of the royal governor with his wise and just measures.

But, ardent as was their love of liberty, and keenly as they felt every new aggression upon their rights, they kept the law ever upon their side. In spite of imprisonment, they remonstrated firmly and respectfully with their rulers; but there was no open outbreak — no popular riot; for Puritanism had little sympathy with mobs. But their prayers were marked with greater earnestness, and, perhaps, duration, and there was a general tendency to wait and see what the Lord would do for them in the matter.

But, when the governor began to attack and suppress their religious liberties, one deep, indignant throb passed through the heart of the whole people. But the rulers heeded it not, and soon came an order requiring them, on pain of his Maj

esty's displeasure, to abstain from all manual labor on the approaching Christmas, and to observe the fasts of the established church. Silent, but strong, — resistless as the mighty under-current of the ocean, swelled the spirit of opposition in every heart, and many an old veteran of the commonwealth and the Indian wars glanced grimly at his brightly-polished musket, with the thought that he was not yet too old to strike a blow for freedom.

Such was the state of affairs, and such the feeling with which the colonists greeted the Christmas of 1684. For several weeks the snow had lain deep on the earth, and the well-trodden paths had grown hard and smooth as marble. It had been a prosperous and busy season with the people, both on the land and sea, and, had there not been a principle at stake, they could well have afforded to rest one day at the call of their chief magistrate. But to them it seemed a concession to Anti-Christ — a crossing of hands with the woman clothed in scarlet; and more than one face was turned anxiously towards the heavens on Christmas eve, not to seek for the star in the east, but to watch the progress of a storm of sleet and rain which had set in, and which they felt might, if it continued, compel them to yield, in appearance, at least, to the governor's mandate. But, as if in answer to their prayers, the morning broke clear, serene and cold. Long before the low, continuous dropping from the ice-bound trees and shrubs attested the power of the sun, their farm-yards were full of the shows of life and labor. The measured beat of the flail and the flax-brake, the ringing stroke of the axe at the wood-pile, keeping time with those in the woods, echoed far and wide through the clear air, while the long teams of oxen, attached to the clumsy sleds that passed the governor's mansion, and the quick, determined tones of the drivers, might have taught one even less versed in the knowledge of men and things than Governor Cranfield, something of the spirit of the people with whom he had to deal.

Mason and Randolph were both guests at the governor's mansion at that time — the latter holding the office of collector, surveyor and searcher of the customs throughout New England, in which capacity his arbitrary proceedings excited universal contempt and distrust.

Whatever the governor might have felt at the utter contempt with which his commands were treated, he was too much of a courtier to disturb the festivities of the day by any display of his chagrin. He therefore listened to the indignant remarks of his guests, and the somewhat cutting jests of Randolph, with an air of moderation, though the latter was too well read in the human heart, not to perceive that his end was gained, that this assumed tone of moderation was but the prelude to stronger and more stringent measures towards a people whom he both despised and hated.

The great dining-room of the governor's mansion, or Province House, as it was sometimes termed, presented a gay and brilliant scene on that same Christmas day; and, could those old Puritans have caught one glimpse, from under their steeple-crowned hats, of the rich festoons of evergreens which decked the walls (a custom held in utter abhorrence by them, as savoring strongly of the idolatry that caused Israel to sin under every green tree), and the noble ladies and gay cavaliers who, in the rich costume of the day, thronged the dinner-table — could they have listened, but for one moment, to the light jests, the courtly phrases, the flippant witticisms and ridiculous caricatures of their own speech and manners — they might have had some reasonable doubt, especially after the ladies had withdrawn, as to whether it was indeed a Christian festival, or a sacrifice to not exactly Baal, but Bacehus.

CHAPTER II.

Perhaps there is nothing more indicative of the character of a people than their architecture. This was peculiarly true of the Puritans. Strength and endurance were among their chief characteristics, and of these qualities their buildings largely partook. There was none of that jumbling together of different ideas and orders, which makes so many of our modern buildings, especially those in country towns, look so much like the cob-houses we were wont to build in our childhood; but there was that same significant, independent, self-sustained air about them, that we see looking out from the portraits of the old worthies of that day.

The house of Mr. Moody, that "godly man" who for many years "illuminated" the church of Portsmouth, was an illustration of these remarks. It stood in an ample yard, the rear of which was planted with young fruit trees, bearing names whose very sound brought with them, the memory of Old England. Over this yard the white snow lay in a broad unbroken sheet, save where three or four paths, in the direction of the barn, crossed and re-crossed each other like dark threads, and where one, several feet broad, led from the front door to the gate, near which rose an oak of enormous girth, one of the primeval children of the forest; for even the oldest settler did not remember the time when the lightning had blighted its top, and raised those wide, dark seams in its trunk. But the heart of the old giant was still sound, and from the huge bole had risen limbs of a girth and height that might well shame the growth of our own days. On each side of this brave old tree stood a noble specimen of—we were about to say, the American plane-tree; but let us call them by the good old names by which we have known them from infancy—buttonwood. Tall, erect, and symmetrical, their scarred and mottled coats giving evidence of many a wild

struggle with the elements, they stood, rustling a few withered leaves, like a banner of defiance in the wind, meet supporters of the hoary monarch. We have been somewhat particular in describing these trees, because, in the out-of-door life which, partly from necessity, and partly from a kind of natural vagabondism, we have led among the New England hills, we have learned to love their whole race, and many a kindly deed have they done for us, both in sunshine and in storm; and, aside from these, we cannot say much for the embellishments of parson Moody's yard. Doubtless, the turf was thickly sown with buttercups, dandelions, and daisies, through the golden summer; and, even in that bleak December of which we speak, there were some faint indications there that went to show that somehow, in that roomy old mansion, the spirit of beauty had found shelter; for the gnarled branches of a native grape were twisted like serpents around and above the uncouth porch, and the withered tendrils of the morning-glory, that most home-like of all flowers, still hung swaying from the strings that had trained them over the windows. And, surely, no more fitting home could it have found than in the heart of gentle Sibyl Moody. She was the minister's only child; for one sorrowful night the angels of life and death had met beneath his roof, and, within the same hour, the one took from him a beloved wife, and the other laid in his arms a motherless infant.

Mr. Moody had been sternly educated in a stern school. The tenets of his faith, notwithstanding their high spiritual aims, were, as generally understood and taught, little calculated to develop the gentler qualities of the heart; such development being looked upon by those men of iron natures as a weakness little befitting those who had "a great work in hand." Therefore, if he manifested in his younger days more of the zeal of Peter than the gentleness of John, it is not surprising. Late in life he had married a gentlewoman many years younger than himself. She was one of that class

of women with whom love seems a necessity of their natures ; whose affections spontaneously, as it were, cling round some *one* or some *thing*, without any very clear recognition of that stern law of reciprocity so binding upon most of us. With her, it was, indeed, "more blessed to give than to receive ;" and for a few short years she walked by his side, looking up to him with mingled love and awe, happy in the thought that she was permitted to minister to the comfort of so worthy a man, dreaming little of the wealth of deep, earnest feeling that slept beneath his calm, severe exterior. But it is not to his victims alone that death unveils mysteries. He has lessons for the living, also ; and when his shadowy presence darkened so suddenly the minister's dwelling, the miracle of the desert was repeated — from that hitherto calm, self-sustained heart welled up to the light a fountain of pure and earnest love. Then it was that his dead wife became truly united to him heart and soul, and from out her grave sprang joy and hope, inexpressibly tender, such as he had never known before, and which he felt were for eternity. From that hour the zeal of the Puritan became tempered by the divine spirit of love.

In this atmosphere of chastened love and faith, Sibyl Moody had grown up to early womanhood. Her father had watched over her with a mother's care and love ; she had been his constant companion, and he had developed, guided, and trained her rich genial nature, until it had the free grace and symmetry of a young tree of the forest. Her face was one of those which in a crowd might easily be overlooked, or set down as passing fair ; but to childhood and old age it was exceedingly beautiful, possibly, because the one was still blessed with faint recollections, and the other with dim fore-shadowings, of the bright denizens of their eternal home.

One man-servant and Lament Collins, or Aunt Menta, as she was usually called, made up the minister's household ; the latter being housekeeper, as well as maid-of-all-work, and, we

might add, nurse, watcher, and doctress-general for the whole settlement. Moreover, we take this occasion to say that her name, like a great many others, was a decided misnomer, for never was a more cheerful or contented being than this same herb-gathering, syrup-making, salve-concocting old woman.

Like a great many other excellent souls of her day, she had a great horror of any leaning to the forms of Episcopacy, and, firmly believing that "*c'est le premier pas qui coute*," she had plied her wheel to such good purpose on the aforesaid Christmas day, that nearly twice the number of knots allotted as a day's work had been reeled long before night, and added to the goodly bunch of yarn that graced the wall of the old sitting-room.

Whether Sibyl had meant to give the old dame a quiet lesson in Christmas tolerance, or whether she had been day-dreaming (for no one can convince us that those fair shapes that blessed our fathers' households were not sometimes dreamers like ourselves, for woman's heart beat under those prim bodices, and woman's love looked forth from beneath those puritanic caps and bonnets), we cannot say; but, for some reason, Aunt Menta's last spool was reeled, while hers still lacked many notches of being full. With her clear eyes glancing occasionally from her thread to the hour-glass on the table, and from thence towards the declining sun, she busily plied her wheel, while Aunt Menta glided here and there, with the velocity and something of the look of a blue dragon-fly, for night was approaching, a puritan Saturday night, when all secular business, instead of being crowded into the last hours of the week, and, perchance, Sunday morning, as is often the case now, was laid aside long before sunset, and each soul left free to commune with itself and its God.

Perhaps, of all the customs that have had an influence in the formation of that peculiar character that makes us New Englanders a marked people wherever we go, none has been

more lasting or important than this same habit of "keeping Saturday night."

Though no watcher among the tombs, no worshipper of "linen grave-clothes," rather than the risen, glorified spirit, we confess that we see with regret this old custom yielding to the innovations of a new age. Not that we consider one night more holy than another, all time being God's; but it came to check the current of worldliness, it gathered the family beneath the paternal roof, it brought an opportunity for undisturbed reflection and that self-communion so necessary to anything like a true estimate of life and life's ends. It is becoming quite the fashion to speak contemptuously and lightly of these old mile-stones which our fathers erected on the way of life, yet they have still a significance for us, would we but read it.

Sibyl's task was completed, the tea-table, with the standing puritanic Saturday-night dish, baked pork and beans, was drawn in front of the blazing fire, when Mr. Moody, accompanied by one of the elders of his church, who had been closeted in his study with him for a long time, entered the room. Their faces were unusually grave, that of the minister even sad, as he observed, in reply to a remark of the elder :

"Verily, the day of our sore visitation is not yet passed, for the prince of evil never wearieth of devices, and our enemies are busy, both here and at home. The future looketh dark, and our hearts might well faint, were it not for the blessed assurance that God still reigns. And, as we would approve ourselves to Him rather than man, so must we judge in this matter of our offending brothers."

While the minister spoke, Aunt Menta was standing by the window in an attitude of reverent attention; but it must be confessed that the good dame's eyes wandered more than once to the opposite side of the common, along which a train of clumsy but highly ornamented sleighs, or pungs, as they were then termed, were passing at a furious rate.

The younger and gayer portion of the governor's guests were settling their dinner by a ride, and their rapid driving and merry laughter, as they passed through the streets, were sadly at variance with puritanic notions of propriety. As Mr. Moody ceased speaking, a loud cry from the old dame cut short the elder's reply, and drew them all to the window. Directly in front of the house the whole train had come to a stand. Some part of the harness attached to the governor's sleigh had given way, and the spirited horses, so suddenly checked in their mad career, were with difficulty held in by the driver, while their struggles to free themselves were frightful.

The occupants of the sleigh, among whom were several ladies, seemed for a moment paralyzed. Then the gentlemen sprang to the assistance of the driver, and being joined by several of their companions, the horses were soon disentangled, and by the aid of Mr. Moody's man, John, the broken harness repaired. Sibyl, in her terror for the young beings in the sleigh, had stood with clasped hands, leaning against the window-frame, watching intently the movements of the frightened horses, unmindful of the admiring gaze of a lady who occupied a sleigh directly in front of the window. She did not hear the lady's words of admiration, or see her touch her cavalier's arm and draw his attention from his impatient horse to herself; but she turned just in time to catch a glimpse of a well-known face and beaming smile, which sent the blood rushing to her very temples.

"Frederic Vane, as true as I live!" exclaimed Aunt Menta, who had also caught a glimpse of the face, using her strongest form of affirmation.

"Frederic Vane," repeated the minister; "you must be mistaken, Menta. The youth still tarrieth in England."

"Nay, I believe she speaketh truly, reverend sir. I met the youth of whom you speak in the hall of the governor's house yesterday, as I returned from my fruitless interview with him," said Elder Hale.

"Indeed!" replied Mr. Moody, while, for a moment, the sad, grave expression of his features relaxed into something like a smile; "perhaps he hath already grown weary of the world's vanities — wealth, honor and ambition — and returned to seek a truer happiness here; for the youth was well taught, and by no means ignorant of the things which pertain to man's highest good. Didst thou learn what brought him to the province again?"

"He came as escort to the governor's ward, — Eleanor Meredith, I think they call her, — to whom men say he is betrothed in marriage."

"Ah, is it so?" said the old minister, sadly. "He often spoke, when with us, of having his fortune to carve out, forgetting, after the manner of men, that, though man proposes, God disposes. Yet there was much that was noble in him — much that spoke to our earthly affections; and I grieve," he continued, earnestly, "I deeply grieve to hear that he has chosen his lot among our oppressors. But the power of the world is very strong!"

"Who says it? who says it?" whispered Sibyl, suddenly laying her hand upon the elder's arm.

The words and manner, so unexpected and so unusual from her, caused both the old men to start.

"My child! my Sibyl!" exclaimed her father, anxiously, as he caught a view of her white cheek, "you are ill. Some water, Menta," he continued, folding his arm about her for a support. "This fright has been too much for you."

"Nay, I am better, my father," she said; "but you have not replied to my question, Father Hale."

"O, it was only the vain gossip I was compelled to hear at the Province House, while waiting to see the governor. Doubtless you will soon be better informed by the youth himself. But I fear you are little better than a coward, to be so frightened at those horses, for all you have grown into such a tall girl," returned the grim elder, with the nearest approach

to a smile that he was ever known to be guilty of on Saturday after twelve o'clock.

The evening meal was over, the chapter read, and the fervent prayer offered, at a much earlier hour in the minister's dwelling than usual, that night, for the thick-gathering troubles of his people weighed heavily upon the old man's spirit, and he would be alone with his God.

"My child," he said, as he laid his hand upon her head in blessing, "you are not looking quite well, and had best seek repose."

Her room adjoined his own, and could he have seen her an hour later, as she knelt there, pressing a richly-chased locket, with its heavy lock of dark hair, to her lips — could he have caught the murmured words, "He false! he wed the governor's ward! O, they do not know him; they cannot know him as I do!" — he would at least have made a discovery which, in the usual routine of their daily life, he seemed likely never to make. He would have *felt* that his child was a *woman* — a woman in thought and feeling, with the strongest links in her chain of destiny already forged and pressing upon her heart.

CHAPTER III.

Some months previous to Governor Cranfield's arrival in the province, a young man, bearing the name of Frederic Vane, had arrived at Portsmouth from the colony of New York, with private letters of importance for that gentleman. As the governor was not expected to arrive until October, and the mansion chosen for his residence was undergoing extensive alterations, the youth took up his quarters at the principal inn. The settlement suffered much from an epidemic fever that season, and, among others, the landlord and the young stranger were both seized with it. As was then the

custom, the minister and his family were everywhere among the sufferers, not only to sympathize and advise, but to *help*.

Mr. Moody, seeing that both the patients could not have the necessary care bestowed upon them at the inn, had the young stranger removed to his own house. As was usual with the members of his profession at that time, he possessed considerable knowledge of medicine, and, aided by the excellent nursing of Aunt Menta, to say nothing of her wonderful syrups, prepared after a recipe given to her sainted mother by one of the Bouchier family, and used in the family of the Lord Protector himself, according to the good dame, together with the gentle ministry of Sibyl, what wonder, the crisis once passed, that the youth grew rapidly convalescent? What wonder that the gentle stranger — so patient in his illness, so eloquent in his gratitude — grew as rapidly dear to the minister's family?

Mr. Moody was a scholar, a graduate of one of England's universities. The members of his flock were men of sound sense and respectable attainments, but they cared little for the classic lore of the schools; therefore, the good man the more keenly enjoyed this daily intercourse with a mind so well cultured, so ingenuous, so full of noble aspirations, as that of his young friend and guest.

Ill, a stranger in a strange land, this was, as, thank Heaven, it ever has been with woman, sufficient reason for the interest with which Aunt Menta and Sibyl watched over him. But, as the weeks went on, and the flush of health deepened on his cheek and lit up his proud, dark eyes, was it still only this that gave the sudden impetus to the young blood of the maiden at the sound of his step, and sent it, blushing like a rosy dawn, over neck and cheek whenever he stole upon her unawares?

Or, as he read, with his clear, low voice and distinct enunciation, those works which bear fruit for all time — the glorious essays of John Milton — to the delighted old minister, was it mere gratitude, and nothing more, that led him, at each

divine truth and sublime thought, to invariably turn to her, as if he sought to gather from her sweet face a double harvest of pleasure ?

So they thought ; and, perhaps, the whole experience of life does not contain hours of purer, more unalloyed happiness, than this unconscious growth of love, this slow unfolding of the heart's flower, ere passion hath breathed upon its leaves for fruition or decay.

But we cannot dream forever, and the hours, which linger only in the presence of sorrow, soon brought the awakening.

The business which had brought him to Portsmouth was arranged, and on the evening which preceded his departure for England, Sibyl and he found themselves alone in the large old sitting-room of the parsonage. The minister had been suddenly called forth on some errand of mercy, and Aunt Menta was still busy with her household labors in the kitchen. The night was dark and blustering, but a bright fire blazed in the wide fireplace, giving a cheerful aspect to the room, near which sat Sibyl, gazing intently at the glowing embers, while Frederic Vane paced restlessly the oaken floor.

The maiden started suddenly, as a gust of wind drove a shower of heavy rain-drops against the window, and, turning her sorrowful face towards him, said, eagerly,

"Hear you that, Frederic ? The 'Adventure' will not sail to-morrow. You will stay with us another day ; perhaps another week."

"Sybil," said the young man, suddenly pausing before her, and taking both her hands in his, "you will never forget me ?"

"Forget you ! — you, my brother !" said the young girl, raising her tear-dimmed eyes to his face.

"Brother !" repeated he, impatiently. "Do not call me so again."

"And why not, Frederic ? You promised to be my brother always."

"Because, because," he said, impatiently, "there is a love stronger, deeper, truer, even, than a brother's. I have heard of it, but now I know it — I feel it; and you, Sibyl," — he paused and gazed down into her eyes, until the tremulous, white lids drooped, and the color in her cheek went and came like the changeful lights in the northern sky, — "you, too, feel and know it," he added, as he drew her to him with a glance of joy.

For one moment her fair head rested on his breast as he whispered, "No, we cannot forget, dearest Sibyl. In two years I shall return to claim" —

The quick step of Aunt Menta upon the threshold interrupted his words, but he could not fail to read aright the expression of those bashful eyes that for one second met his, as she hurriedly slipped from his arms and escaped from the room.

When she returned, she found her father there, and two of the chief men of the town, who wished to avail themselves of the young man's return, to transmit letters to their friends in England.

It is questionable whether either of the young people profited much by the sage remarks of the gentlemen, on the probable length of the "Adventure's" voyage, the prospect of fair weather, etc.; but *his* silence only raised him in their esteem.

"A very discreet and sensible youth; one who has a proper respect for his elders," observed Mr. Amesbury to his companion, as they left the house.

Mr. Moody had, indeed, noticed the thoughtful silence of his young guest, but even his heart, schooled to submission by many and sore trials, grew sad at the thought of parting, and he did not deem it strange. The slight interruption caused by the departure of the gentlemen had scarcely subsided, and the family once more gathered in silence around the hearth, when they were startled by a message from the captain of the

ship, saying, that as there was a prospect of fine weather, and the wind was getting to be fair and steady, the gentleman had best come on board within a half hour or so, as he should probably sail at flood-tide.

His trunks were already on board; still there were bustle and confusion in the minister's quiet dwelling, for each of its members had thought of something more for his comfort. Then, they once more gathered in that room, and Sibyl, with the self-restraint peculiar to her puritan training, forced back her sobs, while her father's low voice rose in fervent petitions for Heaven's blessing upon their young friend in all his wanderings. Then the young man's head was bowed to receive his blessing. Aunt Menta's good wishes responded to, and repeated directions concerning his health listened to, with due respect, he turned to Sibyl. For some seconds he pressed her hands in silence, while his lips trembled as he gazed into her tearful eyes. "God bless you, Sibyl! You will not forget," he murmured, at length.

"The child will not be likely to do that," replied the old man, with a smile. "We shall all miss you much, my son, and think of you often with prayers."

"But she should have something to remind her of me," he said, taking from his own neck a locket attached to a light gold chain. "You will permit her to wear this for my sake, dear sir; nor will she prize it the less because it was the gift of my only sister."

The old man smiled, as he replied, "Be it so. Youth seeks to remember, old age to forget. Such is life, my children."

The maiden bent her head while the young man threw the light chain over her neck, and her cheek glowed like the rose when she again lifted it, for she saw that the light hair of the sister, which she had often seen within the locket, had given place to a lock of a darker hue.

CHAPTER IV.

On the day succeeding Christmas, the congregation of the faithful, in the town of Portsmouth, came up to the house of the Lord with countenances unusually grave and severe, for one of their own number had fallen into grievous sin, and, moreover, the arbitrary proceedings of Governor Cranfield weighed heavily upon their hearts. Yet a gleam of stern joy lit up more than one face at the thought of the quiet yet decided rebuke conveyed in the conduct of the people on the preceding day; and the light of eternal truth which they *did* hold, though oftentimes warped and perverted by human error, never shone more brightly than on that day, darkened as it was by the shadow of future trouble.

The service for the day was over when the minister proceeded to lay before the church the case of John Denney, a member, charged with perjury. He stated the case in detail; but it is sufficient for us to say, that this Denney was the owner of a vessel which had been seized by Randolph, on plea of defrauding the revenue. Her master, however, found means to elude the vigilance of his agents, and one morning she was missing from the harbor. Her owner protested that he knew nothing of the affair, but, upon his trial, there appeared abundant testimony to the contrary. He soon found the means to compound the matter with the governor and Randolph, but the church, of which he had long been a member, were not so easily satisfied.

Mr. Moody, though he knew he was particularly obnoxious to the governor and his party, on account of the plainness and freedom of his speech, shrank from no trial in the way of duty. He felt that the purity of his church was at stake, and addressed a respectful note to the governor, requesting a copy of the evidence against Denney, that he might be tried according to their ecclesiastical discipline. The governor had replied, and, upon this letter, Mr. Moody particularly wished

for the opinion and counsel of the brethren. He rose and read it in a firm, unfaltering voice, and with an undisturbed countenance, though the faces around him grew dark with indignation. Thus ran the missive :

"We ourselves have pardoned the man, and those to whom *we* see fit to extend our mercy are not to be questioned by any self-constituted authority ; therefore, molest him at your peril."

"My brethren," resumed the old man, after a pause of some seconds, "when, in my early manhood, I dedicated myself to the service of God, to break the bread of life to his scattered and suffering people, I cast from me all fear of bodily peril, and have ever striven to act in all things with a single eye to God's glory. Therefore, I have but one answer to make to this man whom the majesty of England hath set to rule over us. Ye have heard his words, my brethren ; and it is reserved unto you to say whether this church, gathered amid suffering and trouble, and nurtured with so many prayers and tears, shall serve God or man. Let such as fear Him, rather than man, arise !"

The congregation rose to a man, and the minister looked down on a crowd of faces, toil-worn, seamed, and scarred by many a battle with both temporal and spiritual foes, in many cases pale and haggard from illness, but firm and undismayed, ready to strengthen his hands, even as Aaron and Hur strengthened the hands of Moses in the battle of the Lord.

Then followed a unanimous vote to notify the offending brother that his trial would take place on the ensuing week, and a committee was appointed to visit him once more, to urge upon him the duty of confession.

It was the wish of the brethren that the old minister should prepare a sermon upon false swearing for the ensuing Sabbath ; and, while he was very busy in his study, how sped the time with his daughter ?

Still lighted by hope, although, but by that one glance of recognition, Frederic Vane had not as yet manifested a knowledge of her existence, yet, like all her sex, her invention in providing excuses for the being she loved, was inexhaustible. A dark tempest was gathering over her own and her old father's head, while she, in her unsuspecting truth and innocence, lived on in hope and trust.

Before another Sabbath, John Denney, touched by the earnest prayers and expostulations of his brethren, came before them, and made ample confession of his guilt, and, with fitting censure, was forgiven. It would be difficult to describe the anger and mortification of the royal governor when he heard of these proceedings. His occasional outbursts were the more frightful from the strong self-control which he was obliged to place upon himself in the presence of his guests, many of whom were spending the holydays with him. Randolph, whose interest in the matter was quite equal to the governor's, seemed to forget his own anger in the malicious pleasure he took in probing that of the latter.

One evening, after the ladies had withdrawn, and the gentlemen, some six or eight in number, still lingered around the dinner-table, he arose, and, as if in reply to some gay remark of his *vis-à-vis*, cried, jestingly :

"Hear ! O, noble gentlemen, hear ! William de Graiville, gentleman, of Sussex, England, hath fairly won ten guineas of me, Edward Randolph — a wager between us in the case of the King *versus* Fanaticism ; and, certes, gentlemen, his majesty may well look grave, when his royal authority, vested in the person of our excellent host here, is thus trampled upon by a crop-eared, psalm-singing knave, unless, indeed," he added, with a laugh, " the merrie monarch be more inclined to consider the crestfallen condition of our puissant selves, as an especial provocation to mirth, which I think the most likely."

"Then, by the Lord that liveth !" exclaimed the governor,

in a burst of ungovernable anger, "his majesty will be the only one who will care to laugh twice, at least where Edward Cranfield is concerned. As for this old priest, he shall soon find that he is not in heaven, saint though he claim to be. I will put him where his treasonable discourses will find fewer listeners!"

For a moment deep silence followed this speech, for they felt that his excellency was in no mood for joking. Then one of the eldest of his guests, whose moderate counsels had often saved him from rash deeds, remarked:

"But we must not forget that this Puritan is also an Englishman. We must prove his treason before we punish him."

"O, that is easily enough done!" said one of the younger guests. "Here is Vane, who spent some months at his house. He can give us proof by the bushel, I dare say."

"Yes, speak out, Vane. What treasonable homilies did old Crop-car preach to you?" cried another, laughing.

"And so betray the man to whom, perhaps, I owe my life. *Never!* even were he guilty of the charge," replied the young man, rising, while his beautiful mouth, in which there was a singular blending of strength and indecision, grew rigid with indignant scorn. "And, believe me, gentlemen," he added, more calmly, "Mr. Moody, when I knew him, was a kind, well-educated, generous-hearted man, though deeply imbued with the spirit of his faith, I grant. He spoke to me openly, as if I had been his own son, and, during my whole stay under his roof, I heard nothing which *could* be construed into treason against his majesty or the realm."

"Perhaps, among his gifts, he had that of prophecy also, and foresaw that the day might come when you would really stand in that filial relation to him. 'Tis said the old man has a pretty daughter. Eh, Vane?" said another.

"By the mass, Darcy, your shaft has hit home," cried de Graiville, seeing the mounting color on Vane's cheek. "No need to blush, Vane; I saw the damsel to-day, and she is fair

enough to be worth the trouble of winning. I give you fair warning that I am going to enter the lists with you ; but remember that I never woo save *par amours*. I gave her a look to-day ; and Randolph's ten guineas to a crown-piece that I succeed, notwithstanding your advantage of previous acquaintance. Your saints are never quite sound at the core."

"Rascal !" exclaimed Vane, choking with indignation, as he aimed a wine-glass at de Graiville's head. But his arm was suddenly caught back, and the voice of the gentleman who a few moments before had sought to moderate the governor's anger, whispered in his ear, as he drew him aside, —

"Rash blood, rash blood, young man ; though I grant you had just cause."

For some moments the room was in confusion, when the governor, as the shortest way of settling a temporary peace, proposed adjourning to the drawing-room. But the syren tones and marked preference of the honorable Eleanor Meredith had lost their fascination for Frederic Vane that evening. His mind, for some weeks occupied by her, was now thoroughly roused, and his thoughts busy with the past.

Hitherto, we have said little of young Vane's personal appearance, and, perhaps, we may as well briefly describe it, inasmuch as it was a fair index to his character. His face was just such an one as ever wins the love of young and trusting hearts, — full of rich, sensuous beauty ; that peculiar moulding of feature and expression which, by self-culture and careful training, may be developed into the noblest form of manly beauty, or, by indolence and self-excess, degenerate into mere sensualism. There was no lack of intellect ; and, with the whole energy of his nature aroused by the events of the evening, perhaps he never looked more worthy of admiration than on the night of which we speak, as he sat in thoughtful silence by the side of the fair English lady.

As he was crossing the gallery towards his own room, late that night, a servant overtook him, saying that the governor

requested a few moments' private conversation with him. He turned to his excellency's private room, and met, not the angry, baffled ruler, but the smooth, polished courtier of the reign of Charles I.

After some desultory remarks, and a graceful allusion to and apology for his own want of self-control at the dinner-table, the governor laid his hand on a pile of letters, and said :

"I have had no opportunity to speak to you of the contents of your mother's letters. She says that the death of your only near male relative and guardian has left me, her distant cousin, your natural friend and adviser, and wishes me to procure for you some situation which may be adapted to your talents. I am willing to do this, as much for your own sake as hers. Your natural abilities are good, my influence at court not small. With such grounds to start from, it will be your own fault if you do not reach a high round on fame's ladder. Only be wary and prudent, boy, and let me hear no more of such brawls as that we have just witnessed. Indeed, I much commend your spirit, but, as a general thing, quarrels are impolitic. If de Graiville challenges you, as most likely he will, you must meet him ; but, henceforth, quarrel only when it will further your ends better than peace. And," he added, smiling, "you are young and handsome — *marry* well. Methinks you had one by your side this evening who would not need much wooing. Add her wealth to my influence and your talent, and your way is clear. By Jove, boy, if you show one half the spirit in wooing my ward, Eleanor, that you did to-night in defending that old rebel, she will be yours in a fortnight ! As to his daughter, let de Graiville woo her as he lists. It is naught to us."

Alas for the vanity and worldliness of the human heart ! Where was the high and noble spirit that had hurled defiance at de Graiville a few hours before ? Chilled by the cold breath of worldly wisdom, until, long before he again

sought his own room, the gentle memory of Sibyl, which had been so surely drawing him back to her side during the evening hours, had faded before the fitful glare that gleamed from the ambitious path which the governor's words had opened.

CHAPTER V.

Day after day passed, and the light of hope glimmered fainter and fainter in the heart of Sibyl Moody. The report of Frederic Vane's engagement to the lovely English lady became current among the townspeople, and, though she seldom trusted her lips with his name, she could not fail to hear it. Gradually came the conviction that she was forgotten, and with it that hour of withering anguish, — that bitter struggle when the young heart finds, for the first time, that its cherished idols are false — its love and trust dishonored. It was a fearful trial — that feeling of utter desolation that settled upon her heart, congealing for a time its very life-blood. She met it alone, and alone she sought for strength to bear it. Though such struggles cannot be, and leave no trace upon the outward frame, her old father, more than usually occupied with the troubles of his society, happily failed to notice the growing pallor of her cheek or the unusual lassitude of her movements. They did not, however, escape the watchful eye of Aunt Menta ; but she, kind soul, while she urged, nay, forced upon the maiden double doses of her syrups, could not, when she looked upon her bowed form and careworn face, bear to add to his anxiety.

One evening, as the old man turned with a heavier step than usual toward his study door, he suddenly paused and gazed for some seconds anxiously on the face of his child.

“Sibyl,” he said at length, “I wish to speak with you in my study. Will you come?”

The glance and the words brought a deep blush to the

maiden's cheek, as, with a mental prayer for strength to conceal her suffering, she arose and followed him.

He took his arm-chair by the table, and, leaning his head on his hands, sat for some time as if occupied in silent prayer, while his daughter drew a low seat to his side, and, laying her head on his knee, as in the days of childhood, awaited his words.

"Sibyl," he said, at length, passing his hand fondly over her hair, "thy father hath grown old and forgetful. In the trials and troubles with which it hath pleased Him to surround my age as well as my youth, I have forgotten that my child hath grown to womanhood. This day, Elder Hale hath reminded me of it, by asking thee in marriage for his son. He is a deserving youth, of a family rich in temporal blessings, but richer still, I trust, in the heavenly inheritance that awaiteth the servants of the Lord. What answer shall I make to this young man, my child?"

"O, send me not from you! Let me live and die with you, my father!" cried the poor girl, burying her face in her hands upon his knee, while every nerve in her fair neck twitched convulsively in her effort to suppress her emotion.

"I have no wish to send you from me Sibyl; but sore trouble, imprisonment, and perhaps death, await me. Listen, my child. This day the governor hath notified me that he, together with Mason and his follower Hinckes, will partake of the Lord's Supper with us next Sabbath; and, moreover, he requireth me to administer it according to the forms of the established church, with liturgy and vain repetitions. This, of course, I have wholly refused to do; therefore he hath the pretext against me which he hath long sought. Before another day he may drag me to prison, and though I know that He will not try me beyond my strength, yet the thought of thee, my daughter," — and, for the first time since he commenced speaking, the old man's voice grew tremulous, —

"homeless and exposed to the snares of the spoiler, weakeneth my heart."

"Father," said Sibyl, raising her head from his knee, and speaking very earnestly, "could you be happier separated from your child?"

For a moment there was a struggle in the old man's heart, and the rigid lines about his mouth moved convulsively as he exclaimed, "Tempt me not, my child! O, tempt me not!"

"Then we part no more. This governor is human; he cannot forbid the child to share her father's fate. Let that be what it may, I will not shrink, if so be we may meet it together. But speak no more," and the enthusiasm, which for a moment had lit up her pale face, gave place to the expression of bitter suffering. "O, speak no more, I entreat of you, of this marriage!"

The old man bent over her, and for some moments his withered cheek rested upon her head, ere he trusted his voice in reply. At length he said, brokenly,

"It was not thy love nor thy devotion that I doubted; but," he added, slowly, "thou art fair, my Sibyl; thou hast thy mother's comely face, and I thought of my death, and the power of our enemies. Yet, surely, there is one among them who, forgetful as he seems, would not see thee wronged. I speak of Frederic Vane."

The quick, convulsive shudder that passed through the girl's frame shook even him, and for some moments he sat in bewildered surprise. Then the truth seemed suddenly to dawn upon him. He raised her head in his trembling old hands, and gazed on her pale face for some moments, while his own grew tremulous with emotion. "My child, my poor child!" he murmured. That mournful tone was too much for Sibyl. The self-command that she had struggled to maintain gave way, and, hiding her face in his bosom, she burst into tears.

"My child, my poor, motherless child!" he murmured again, as he drew her closely to his heart. "And so I cher-

ished a viper under my roof. Blind mole that I was, not to foresee this! So true and noble as he seemed. Heaven knows that I cherished, yea, loved him as a son, and he—I will”—

“Forgive him, father, even as I have forgiven him,” whispered a voice in his ear.

“But you must tell me all, Sibyl, all.”

She left the room, and, after a few minutes’ absence, returned and placed in his hands Frederic Vane’s parting gift, the locket enclosing the lock of hair. Then, kneeling at his side, she simply and briefly related the story of her love, while, with one hand laid upon her head, he gazed thoughtfully down upon her face.

“So my thoughtlessness has darkened the light of thy young life, my daughter, and this man weds another—the ward of our bitterest enemy. He was unworthy of our love, my Sibyl.”

“Blame him not, father. The lady is said to be good,—beautiful, I know her to be, for I saw her once; more fitting to be his wife than simple Sibyl Moody. Yet she can never love him”—Again her hands were pressed upon her eyes, as if to force back the rush of tears. “Enough, my father,” she added, meekly; “if I have sinned in setting up an earthly idol—if I have erred in withholding this matter from you, I have also suffered.”

“I blame you not, Sibyl. It was but natural. Henceforth, we will part no more, and our only trust must be in Him who is both able and willing to save. And kneeling down by her side, in a voice shaken with grief, the old man laid his daughter’s sorrows before the throne of Him whom he had served from his youth.

He had not miscalculated the vengeance of the governor. Two weeks after, the doors of the prison closed behind them. During thirteen weary weeks they were shut away from God’s sunlight and fresh air; but no royal authority could deprive

that old man of the light of a clear conscience, and he often felt, that, like the saints of old, an angel ministered unto him under the form of his child.

And when those heavy doors were opened, and, under the ban of exile, he was again permitted to go forth, the angel was still by his side, for she did not vanish suddenly like those of which we read, but her cheek grew more and more white and transparent, her eye brighter and her step slower, until, with the fall of the leaves, she disappeared from his sight. But the old man looked upward with a calm smile, for he knew that in a few short days he should again look upon her in "those boundless regions of all perfection."

UNCLE JOHN'S VISIT.

A TALE FOR THE TIMES

CHAPTER I.

It came at last, — what the fire, Cassandra-like, had muttered of for several days past ; what people prophesied to each other on the street ; what Bill Lyman, the stage-driver, had foreseen that morning, when he called for his heaviest pea-jacket ; what young maidens and school-boys had looked for with such impatient longings ; what the houseless and homeless had anticipated with anxiety and dread, — the snow-storm.

And a right brave storm it was ; none of your light, trifling affairs, that merely cover the earth with a thin frosting, like that on a bridal loaf, but a regular old-fashioned snow-storm. To be sure, it was rather coquettish at first, like a young horse at starting, but soon it settled down, and went to work in good earnest. It wove dainty coverlets for the violet beds in the deep old woods, and covered them over like a careful mother ; it powdered the heads of the cedars, until they looked like white-haired giants, and wrapped alike the graves of rich and poor in shrouds of dazzling whiteness.

O, very impartial were those same little, white, feathery flakes, that came dancing down at the bidding of the storm, edging alike the blue cloth cloak of Judge Edmonds and the ragged garments of the beggar with

“ Ermine too dear for an Earl.”

Then they made a league with that cool-headed old tactician, the north wind, and together they went skirring through the streets, heaving up embankments here, and digging trenches and forming curves there, rushing round corners, to attack stout, rosy-cheeked gentlemen, who fought and sputtered and dashed the snow from their eyebrows, to see what awaited them next, while the thinly-clad shop-girls drew their shawls closer about them, and scudded in troops, like little snow-birds, close under the lee of the houses, to escape their boisterous greetings. In the space of an hour or so the storm had the city pretty much to itself, for whoever had a shelter was glad to get beneath it, and stay there.

On the corner of C and D streets was a spacious wholesale clothing store, upon which, in hurrying up and down the streets, after the last stragglers, the storm seemed to bestow particular attention. It tried to shake the mahogany-cased windows, and find some crack in them, or in the heavily panelled door, by which it could gain ingress ; but, baffled here, it contented itself with wrapping a white covering over the gilded sign-board, darkening the windows, muffling the steps, and piling up a barricade against the door, as if it said, " Never mind, I'll be ready for you when you do open ! "

Now, it was very provoking, no doubt, but none of these manœuvres seemed to disturb the equanimity of Mr. D. Orestes Jimps, the owner of the store. All the clerks had gone to tea ; and, while waiting their return, he sat before the stove, with his heels resting upon a high stool, rather above the level of his head, and his eyes fixed upon a lamp-hook in the wall, as a kind of tether to his imagination, as he counted up the profits of the day's sales, — a very necessary and commendable process, seeing next day was New-year's, and he anticipated several extra demands upon his purse. Perhaps we should not be far from the truth, if we said that, at the same time, he gave a sort of rough guess at his neighbor Jumper's profits, and wondered *just how much and what*

he would give at their pastor's donation party the next evening ; for Mr. D. Orestes Jimps did not like to be cast in the shade by any one, especially by a rival house ; besides, we are all, at times, so remarkably disinterested, that we take more interest in other people's concerns than our own.

But, hurrah ! the storm has triumphed ! Through the open door falls the barricade of snow, followed by the wind, that sends the glittering particles dancing through the whole length of the store, and raises such a commotion among the various garments, mentionable and unmentionable, suspended overhead, that it is some time before the astonished Mr. Jimps is aware of the cause of this disturbance.

But there she stands, — a little, shrinking, hollow-eyed girl, with a cheek almost as white as the snow matted in her abundant hair, and clinging to the folds of her miserable dress.

"Well, what's wanting, my girl?" asked Mr. Jimps, as the thin, wan face, scarcely higher than the level of the counter, was turned up to him, with a timid, appealing glance.

"Please, sir," began a little, trembling, piping voice, "I have brought some shirts, and mother wants to know if you will be kind enough to let her have the money for them."

Mr. Jimps took the package which the child drew from under her shawl, and deliberately counted the coarse garments it contained, while the little one edged timidly towards the stove.

"Three, four, five, six. Why, child," exclaimed the gentleman, as he finished counting, "how is this? Here is but half the lot we gave out to your mother."

"Yes, sir," returned the child, as she edged back to her first stand ; "mother knew that ; but little Jennie has been so sick, sir, that we could not get any more done ; and — and — it is so cold, and the coal is all gone. Mother hoped, sir, you

would be kind enough to pay her for these, and we will finish the others as soon as we can."

"I thought your mother understood our terms. I told her, when she took the work, that we made it a rule to pay only when the lot was done," returned Mr. Jimps. "There are plenty of people glad to work for us on these terms, and your mother cannot expect us to make an exception in her favor."

"But, please, sir," plead the little one, "little Jennie is so sick, and" —

But Mr. Jimps did not stay to hear her out; for, just at that moment, the outer door again opened, and a person entered, who slammed it to, right in the face of the storm, and began to stamp his boots and shake his garments in a way that gave strong proofs of their firm texture. As soon as Mr. Jimps caught sight of the high nose that peered like a projecting battlement over the folds of the red worsted comforter which enveloped the lower portion of the new-comer's face, he sprang round the counter, and, seizing his hand, shook it heartily, as he exclaimed,

"Why, Uncle John Markham! where *did* you come from? Did you snow down?"

"No, Dimmie," returned the old man, taking off his low-crowned hat, and shaking a miniature snow-storm from its broad brim; "but I'd like to been snowed *under*. Who'd a thought it would have come by such handfuls? I told mother, when I started, I guessed there would be more snow before I got back; but I did not think of its coming so like a judgment. Black Simon and I have had a time of it, I tell you, Dimmie. Whew! my fingers ache like the toothache!" he added, drawing off a thick pair of blue and white yarn mittens, and spreading his hard palms to the fire.

"It is the worst storm we have had yet," returned Mr. Jimps, wincing slightly at the appellation by which the old man addressed him. In his native village, he had always been known as "Dimmie Jimps," it being a sort of abbrevia-

tion of the classical cognomen, Demosthenes Orestes, bestowed upon him by his father, which he had ignored ever since his establishment in the city, signing his name D. Orestes Jimps, Esq. But he knew there was no use in arguing the case with Uncle John. He would always remain Dimmie, with him ; so he smoothed his brow, and said, heartily :

"Come, Uncle John, take a seat and make yourself comfortable, if you can, until some of the boys get back ; then we will go up to the house. Julia will be delighted to see you. You will stay over to-morrow night with us, of course. To-morrow night is Mr. E——'s donation party, and you must certainly attend that. He asks after you always, when he calls." Then, chancing to let his eye fall on the waiting child, whom he had quite forgotten, he said, with a gesture toward the door :

"You had better run home, little girl. Your mother knows my terms, — can't vary for any one. A man must have some rules, and stick by them, if he intends to do anything," he added, turning to Uncle John.

"Ay, sound doctrine that, Dimmie. But what is this? Who could send a child out in such a storm?" said the old man, hastily rising, and striding forward to open the door, the knob of which the child was vainly trying to turn. "There, run home little girl, if you don't intend to be buried," he cried ; "your folks are crazy to send you out in such weather."

For a second, ere she crossed the threshold, the little pale face was turned up to his, as if to thank him, and he saw that it was wet with tears.

"What, what!" he muttered ; and was about to follow her, when he was recalled by the voice of Mr. Jimps :

"Come in, uncle ; you will catch your death standing in that draft !" cried the little man.

"Who was that child, Dimmie? and what possessed her

friends, if she has any, to send her out in such a storm?" asked the old man, as he again seated himself by the fire.

"O, she don't mind it! She is one of the thousands you will find in the city; one scarcely knows who or what they are. Her mother came here for work; and, as she was recommended by one of our hands, whom we could trust, we let her take some. I should think I had heard some one say that her husband was a dissipated sort of a fellow. The city is full of such people."

"But what sent her here to-day? Do you owe them anything, Dimmie?"

"Owe them!" returned Mr. Jimps, laughing. "You must think me hard run, not to be able to pay for half a dozen shirts. I always make it a rule to pay for each lot of work when it is brought in and answers inspection; and that is what I call fair on all sides. But this woman wants me to do more; she has sent in half her lot, and wants me to pay her for these before the rest are done."

"And you did n't do it, Dimmie?" said the old man.

"Not I. I should never get my work done at that rate. If she does not like the terms, she must look elsewhere for work."

"I s'pose there are people who would have been foolish enough to have done it, or, perhaps, given her a little something out of their own pockets," observed the old man, watching the face of Mr. Jimps with a very peculiar expression.

"Yes, and foolish enough they are, as you say. Now, I claim to be as liberal and benevolent as most men; but I act upon system in this as well as everything else. I pay my taxes promptly, and subscribe liberally to several benevolent societies; besides, my wife devotes half her time to their management. If these people really are worthy, and need aid, let them apply to some of these, or to the city authority. Casual charity only encourages street-begging and idleness."

"But — but — I s'pose there are some among them so

proud that they would rather starve than beg," returned the old man, with the same searching glance. "I dare say there are a good many, just in our neighborhood, at home, who would rub pretty close before they would do it."

"No doubt of it. You would be surprised at the degree of pride manifested by the people who work for me, though many of them are poor as Job. These people are doubtless of the same stamp. Lewis," he added, addressing a young clerk, who entered, out of breath with facing the storm, "put down those half dozen shirts to the credit of Mrs. Ives."

"Miss Sarah Ives, George street?" queried the boy.

"No; Mrs. Mary Ives, Bingham Crossing, York road," was the reply, as Mr. Jimps deliberately encased his dapper person in a wadded overcoat, and enveloped his throat in the voluminous folds of a costly merino scarf.

While he was drawing on his overshoes, his guest took from his pocket a large pocket-book, and wrote a few words on a blank leaf.

They were soon ploughing their way in the direction of Mr. Jimps' residence, Uncle John looking the storm square in the face, as if it were an old friend, and Mr. Jimps trying to give it the cut by turning sideways. It bore this a while; but, at last, as they turned a corner, it sprang out upon him, and, flapping the long ends of his scarf in his face, suddenly lifted his shining beaver from his head, and lodged it in a snow-bank, which it had been piling up right under the windows of Governor B——'s mansion, as if for the special amusement of a group of curly-headed children and a lovely young lady, who were watching the process with delight.

"O, if it had only happened anywhere else!" thought Mr. Jimps, as, with one glance at the mischievous face of Miss Eva B—— and the laughing little ones, he picked up his beaver, and disappeared round the corner. Uncle John followed with steady steps. No danger of the storm's playing tricks with his apparel. His hat was jammed down upon his

bald crown, as if he meant it to *stay* there; and we have a suspicion that he rather enjoyed the disasters of Mr. Jimps.

"I say, Dimmie," he remarked, seeing that gentleman pause and turn his back to the storm to get breath, "that little girl must have a hard time of it getting home, won't she?"

"Yes, her people were crazy to send her out at such a time. Ugh! the snow almost blinds one!"

"Very likely," returned the old man, with a peculiar smile, replying to the first part of Mr. Jimps' remark; "poor people are apt to do a great many strange things. But here we are at the door, and there is your wife at the window;" and, with a nod to the rather pretty-looking lady who looked down upon them, the old man followed his nephew into the house.

Uncle John Markham was warmly received by his nephew's wife. He was a bit of a humorist, — "odd as Dick's hat-band," the people said in his village (and, by the way, we should very much like to know in what the peculiarity of the said Richard's hat-band consisted). "*Eccentric*," Mrs. Jimps whispered to her friends, as she introduced him; but then he was rich and childless, and rich folks can afford to be "odd."

His visits were ever welcome among his nephews and nieces, not merely because of his wealth; for, though they were keen-sighted business people, and perhaps did not entirely put *that* out of the question, yet they had sense enough to love and respect the old man for his intrinsic goodness.

Tea being over, and little Augustus Adelmarr, Mr. Jimps' son and heir, having been sent to bed, after making several journeys to "Danbury Cross" on the old man's foot, the conversation turned to the approaching donation party.

"Simpson sent home the stand to-day, dear," said Mrs. Jimps, turning to her husband. "It is a love of a thing. Uncle John, you must see it, — my gift for Mrs. E——, our pastor's wife. I do not believe there will be anything half so

pretty sent in ;” and, running into the opposite parlor, she returned with a beautiful *papier mache* work-stand.

“Why, it is a pretty thing enough,” said the old man, looking at it with a good deal of interest, as his niece explained the material and the process of manufacturing it ; “that butterfly hovering over the rose, there, is as natural as life. But what’s it for, Julia ? It is hardly strong enough to hold a mouse.”

“O, it will hold light things ; and, then, it is such a beautiful ornament in a parlor !”

“And what might it have cost, niece ?” he asked.

“Only twenty dollars. Orestes, how I wish your vases had been sent home, so that Uncle John could have seen them, too. They are such beauties—the real Bohemian glass, and no mistake.”

“And what do they cost ?”

“Twenty more,” was the reply.

“Well, Dimmie, you said you was liberal, to-day, and I do not dispute it ; but it does seem to me, children, with my old-fashioned notions, that you might have laid out your money more wisely, considering your minister’s wife and children. But you mean well, doubtless, and cannot fail to be benefited by it yourselves, whatever your friends may be ; for no one ever opened their purse-strings out of kindness, without being the better for it.”

“In that case, Uncle John, you will return a much better man than you came, for I intend to make a draft on you,” said Julia, blushing and laughing. “We are getting up a society for the suppression of idolatry among the Chinese in California, and I must have you down for a good round sum.”

“Stay a bit, niece. Chinese—I heard they were coming over there by thousands, but I don’t know as they are much worse idolaters than our folks are there. Besides, I have

one or two claims of the society to which I belong to settle, before I can think of yours."

"Your society! Why, I did not know as you belonged to any one, uncle!"

"You were mistaken, then," returned the old man, gravely. "For many years I have been a member of the oldest society in the world,—the same of which our Saviour was a distinguished member while on earth,—the Society of Human Brotherhood, which has for its aim and object all the poor, oppressed, fallen and down-trodden beings upon God's earth. I must attend to this first, niece; and then I will see about yours."

There was silence a few moments, before the old man, who had risen and walked to the window, added, gayly :

"By the by, children, I guess I'll just step round to the hotel, and take a look at 'Black Simon.'"

"Not to-night,—you surely need not go out to-night," cried Mr. and Mrs. Jimps in the same breath.

"Why not? See, it has stopped snowing, and I am not quite so frail as Julia's stand there. Simon had a hard time of it getting here, and the hostler may neglect him, poor fellow! You need not think I am lost if I am not back in an hour or two," he added, as he passed through the hall; "I may find some old friends down there, and chat a while."

CHAPTER II.

"Black Simon" was looked after, and talked to for a few moments, much as if he had been a child; and then, instead of returning to the warm sitting-room of the hotel, or the elegant parlor of Mr. Jimps, the old man sturdily ploughed his way along the snowy streets, until he reached the suburbs of the city.

Here he slackened his steps, and paused occasionally to decipher, by the dim light of the lamps, the numbers on some

of the dilapidated buildings which lined the street. At last he approached one, from which issued the sounds of music and dancing, and knocked loudly at the door. It was opened by a rosy-cheeked Irish girl, in a gay ball costume and dirty white slippers.

"Is there a family of the name of Ives living in this house?" asked the old man.

"Yes there be—the poor craythers; but not in there, sir," was the reply, as she saw Mr. Markham about to lay hold of the latch of a door near by. "That is Teddy McGuire's room. The Ives' are above, sir. I will be afther showin' ye the way, an' ye please."

Uncle John followed the girl up the gloomy, dirty stairs, asking by the way (for the old man was a bit of a Yankee) what was the cause of the festivity below.

"A wedding, sir. Mikey Flaherty is married to Tim Doolan's Bridget, the night," returned the girl, with a smile; adding, as she pointed to a door at the extreme end of the passage, "It's there ye will find them ye seek."

The old man turned to thank her, but she was already half way down stairs, stepping to the lively measure of an Irish jig; so he walked on, and knocked gently at the door which the girl had pointed out. It was opened by the same pale-faced child whom he had seen in his nephew's store. She looked up to him with a quick glance of recognition, mingled with surprise, and then glanced toward her mother, who sat leaning over a miserable bed, on which lay a little child, over whose face the ashen hue of death was already stealing. Seeing that her mother did not observe the stranger, she said:

"It's the gentleman who opened the door for me to-day, mother."

Thus disturbed, the woman looked up, questioningly, almost impatiently, at the intruder.

"Excuse me, ma'am," began the old man, in an apologetic

tone, but deliberately shutting the door behind him. "I fear I intrude; but the little girl is right. I am glad to find she got home safe. My nephew, Mr. Jimps, did not quite understand the child, it seems; and I have come to make it all straight." And he handed out a five-dollar bill as he spoke.

The woman took the bill, looked at it a moment, and returned it with a heavy sigh.

"I cannot change it, sir. I have not a cent of money in the world."

"It's all right, ma'am. I don't want any change—I mean Mr. Jimps don't; he isn't at all particular—that is—I say keep it, ma'am; you need it all, and more too, in such weather as this."

The woman looked at him with mingled wonder and suspicion. At length she said:

"There is some mistake, sir. Mr. Jimps is a very particular man. He owes me but one dollar, and it may bring both of us into trouble if I keep the money."

"Take it, I say. Zounds! have not I a right to do as I please with my—I mean, has n't Mr. Jimps a right to do what he pleases with his money? Take it, and make yourselves comfortable."

The woman waited to be urged no more; she eagerly clutched the money, and burst into tears, as she cried:

"The blessing of those ready to perish be upon you both, sir. I should not have sent out to-day; but we have neither food nor fuel, and little Jennie dying!"

"Have you no one whom you can send out after food and fuel?" asked the old man, with a glance toward the further corner of the room, where, from beneath a pile of rags, came the heavy breathing of a man.

"Yes," returned the woman, as with a troubled expression her eye followed his; "but William, poor fellow, is not well. He is worn out," she went on, with a sigh, "with care, and

want, and trouble. If you will be kind enough to stay with Ellen, sir, I will run down myself, and get what we want. It's only two doors from here," she added, seeing the old man about to remonstrate.

There was something in her manner that recalled to the old man Mr. Jimps' remark about her husband's intemperate habits. She fears to trust him with the money, and perhaps she is right, thought he, as he drew the scanty covering over the dying child, and began to look about for something to kindle a fire with, against the mother's return.

The little girl laid down the coarse shirt-sleeve she was stitching, and came to his aid; but they could find nothing but a few bits of paper.

"That is Willie's kite, sir," whispered she, as the old man laid his hand on that article. "He brought it with him when we moved from the country; but I don't know as he will mind it much if we do take it, if he can only be warm."

As she spoke, a curly head peered out from beneath the rags in the corner, and, presently, a little boy of five or six years old crept to her side.

"Willie, don't wake father!" she whispered, hushing his exclamation of surprise at the sight of the stranger. "We are going to have a fire, and something to eat, Willie," she added. "Mother has gone after the things. Mr. Jimps sent the money by this gentleman, and now it's all right."

The little boy's sleepy eyes flew wide open at the mention of food and fire, and he whispered, with a shy look at Uncle John:

"But will he take us away from this hateful place, sister, and give us dinners every day, just as we used to have them in the country? When I was so hungry, and cried, last night, you said may-be some one would bring me a whole pocket full of cakes, if I would go to sleep. Has he brought them, sissie?"

"Mother has gone after them," said the little girl, while

Uncle John took him upon his knee, and warmed his little red hands between his great palms. Ellen drew close to him, too, and he took her on the other knee, as he asked,

“How long has the little one been sick, dear?”

“Mother says she has never been well; but she ran about and played with Willie and me, until we came here. Ever since, she has been poorly, and we have had to hold her all the while. Sometimes she laughs when I show her my rose-bush, and puts up her hands to catch the leaves. Biddy Flaherty gave it to me, sir; but, lately, she does not seem to notice anything, and mother thinks she will die.”

“And then she will go up to God, away above the clouds, where the cold weather never comes,” said little Willie, lifting his sober eyes to Mr. Markham’s face. “It’s a nice place up there, sir. Would n’t you like to go too?”

Before the old man could reply, the mother entered, followed by a man bearing food and coals.

We do not know whose pleasure was the greatest, the hungry-eyed children’s, as they ate their food by the glowing fire, or old John Markham’s, as he sat by and looked on. We think the children’s, however; for he could not but be saddened by the tale which he heard from the lips of the poor mother, as she hung over her child. It was the old story, which has blotted so many of the fair pages of the book of life. Poverty had followed sickness; thrown out of work, strangers in a strange place, disappointed and despairing, the husband and father had yielded to temptation, and tasted of the accursed cup, until he no longer cared for aught save the gratification of his brutal appetite. For some time past they had depended solely upon the earnings of the mother and little Ellen for support; and these had, of late, been much curtailed by the illness of little Jennie. “I could not let her lie and die before my eyes, even though we were all starved,” said the weeping mother.

Uncle John Markham was not an eloquent man — he never

made a speech in his life ; yet, somehow, the words which he spoke to that fallen, discouraged husband, that night, awoke feelings of hope, and courage, and self-respect in the poor fellow's heart, to which he had long been a stranger.

CHAPTER III.

It was quite late when the old man reached his nephew's house that night, and Mr. Jimps and his wife were too sleepy to ask many questions ; but next morning, at the breakfast-table, they were disposed to be quite curious on the subject of his late hours.

"Fie, Uncle John," began Mrs. Jimps, smiling, as she handed him his coffee ; "this never will do. I shall have to write to Aunt Sarah about it."

"I think I shall write to her myself, this morning," returned the old man, in the same light tone.

"But, uncle, these must be very interesting people, these friends of yours, to keep you up so late," said Mr. Jimps.

"They are ; so much so, Dimmie, that I must introduce them to you. Will you call with me some time in the course of the day ?"

"With great pleasure, uncle."

It being New-Year's day, however, Mr. Jimps, amid calls and business, quite forgot Uncle John's proposal — the more readily as that old gentleman was absent most of the day on business of his own, and it was not until he was about to dress for the donation party in the evening that the old man saw fit to remind him of his engagement.

"Why, it is too late, now, Uncle John. Julia has already commenced dressing for the party," said the little man.

"Well, I can't go to this party with you until I have called on these friends, that's certain," said the old man.

"If you are minded to go with me, I'll have Black Simon

and the sleigh at the door by the time you are dressed, and we can be there and back again by the time Julia gets rigged, if she is like most women-folks."

Black Simon was at the door in time, and bore them with flying steps along the crowded streets. On, on they went, past brilliantly lighted parlors, from whence came the sounds of music and laughter — on, to where the streets began to narrow, and the lights to dwindle, until, with a suddenness that almost took Mr. Jimps' breath from his body, the old man drew up before a rickety old building.

"Uncle John, you must have mistaken the place! your friends surely cannot live here!" cried Mr. Jimps, from beneath the many folds of his scarf.

"May be so — we'll see," was the reply, as the old man sprang out, and, taking a rope from the sleigh, fastened Black Simon securely to a post.

It was too cold for Mr. Jimps to remonstrate; his teeth chattered and his scarf was almost frozen to his lips, even then; so, stepping carefully in his dainty, glistening boots, he followed the old man through the gloomy hall and up the dirty stairs. Mr. Jimps was a somewhat fastidious person, and might, more than once, have taken exception to the various smells that, coming from the different rooms, seemed to congregate in that hall, had he not, fortunately, been too well wrapped up to be aware of them.

Uncle John rapped softly at the Ives' door, and, after waiting a few moments, as no one came, opened it himself. One glance around the apartment taught him the cause of that silence. Near the stove, with his little boy in his arms, who was sobbing in that peculiar spasmodic manner that indicates the utter exhaustion of the physical frame, sat William Ives, with his eyes fixed upon the bed which had been arranged as decently as possible to receive the dead body of little Jennie. The mother had done all her scanty means allowed. She had parted the soft hair on the little

brow, straightened the shrunken limbs, and robed them in a pretty white frock, the last relic of happier days. The dainty edgings with which it was trimmed were in strange contrast with the miserable bed-coverings — edgings wrought by her busy fingers in those happy days when a mother's glad anticipations first stirred her heart. Then she had flung herself on her knees by the side of the bed, and, with her face buried in the clothes, neither wept nor moved.

The grave-eyed Ellen stooped over the bed, and was trying to place a poor, sickly-looking rose in the cold hands of the little one. Uncle John glanced at the bush she had showed him the night before, and he knew at once from whence it came. It was her all, poor thing!

She was the first to observe their entrance, and soon both parents were mingling words of deep gratitude with their tears.

"I shall never, never forget your kindness, sir, to the day I die!" exclaimed the mother, turning to Mr. Jimps. "Much as we needed the money, starving as we were, we thought not less of your confidence in us than we did of that. It was so kind, so noble in you, to trust us! But you shall be repaid, sir; William and I are determined to do it, if we work our fingers to the bone! And this gentleman, to come, as he did, through the snow to aid us! O, how can we ever be grateful enough?"

"My kindness — repay me — you here!" exclaimed the bewildered Mr. Jimps, turning to Uncle John, and rapidly unwinding the folds of his scarf, as if pressed for breath.

"Yes, Dimmie, I was certain you did not quite understand the errand of that little girl, yesterday, so I followed her home, and settled your bill myself. It was well I did, for the poor things needed it very much."

"Save a bit of bread for the children, and a spoonful of milk for — for" — and the poor mother glanced sadly at the

white-robed little figure on the bed, — “for *her*, sir, we had not tasted food for two days.”

Mr. Jimps was neither an unjust nor hard-hearted man; he had simply been guided by the current custom of the day; and, when he had subscribed his quota to any benevolent object, allowed himself to consider his responsibility at an end. Now, a new light broke in upon him; he turned to his old relative, and said, earnestly :

“Thank you, thank you, Uncle John ! you could not have done me a kinder deed; or,” he added, in a lower tone, “taught me a better lesson. It is one which I shall never forget.”

And, to do Mr. Jimps justice, he never did. He told the story to Julia when they got home, and bravely took his share of the blame, while the tears gathered in her pretty eyes, and she almost forgot her present and the donation party, in her interest in the Iveses.

They assisted the father in finding employment, aided and encouraged him in his struggles to overcome his evil habits, and even did not grumble when Uncle John took little Ellen Ives to live with him and Aunt Sally, and be a daughter to them in their old age, though they knew that the inheritance of their darling Augustus Adelmair would be much curtailed by the deed.

AN INCIDENT ON THE SEA-SHORE

Ernst ist das Leben.

ABOUT midway between Sachem's Head and Double Beach, those well-known watering places on the Connecticut shore, a small cove or creek laps, like a silver tongue, up into the main land; and the waters, as if weary of the perpetual strife and moaning seaward, cling close to the shore in little curves and dents, and put out slender silver arms among the coarse, green sedges of the marshes, as if seeking for that inland quiet which it is their destiny never to attain.

It is a quiet bit of water — that small cove, set in a frame of white, wave-ribbed sand, backed by a circle of houses, the green, rank marshes, and a low range of broken upland, scarcely worthy of the name of hills, but sufficient to shut off all objects landward, save a blue, hazy line in the distance, which indicates the outline of the Tetoket range of hills.

But seaward roll ceaselessly the blue waves of the Sound, and, stretching along at the distance of from one half mile to some four or five miles from shore, are scattered a dozen or more islands.

“ Moles that dot the dimpled bosom of the sunny, summer sea ; ”

some, at high water, mere hummocks of rock and sand, over-run by rock-pear, a species of *cactus*, bearing blossoms of delicate yellow, with here and there a stunted pine; others long, low, barren reaches of sand, easy of access, and therefore the chosen locations of “ fish-houses,” with their accompanying

reels, great clumsy machines, which, with the salty, white seine, stretched over their long arms, remind one of giants ready to do battle with the storms; and some few of the larger rock-bound nooks of greenery, where the whortleberry and the raspberry thrive in profusion, and the whispering pines and ancient bass-woods shelter, summer after summer, gay parties of pleasure-seekers, old and young.

Beyond these the view is unbroken, save when, on a clear, sunny day, the shores of Long Island loom faintly through the distance, golden, azure, and pearl-hued, like the walls of some enchanted city. Many and many a time, when a child, have I watched these shores from the wooded hillside pasture above our old homestead, and thought of the New Jerusalem, with its walls of precious stones, and its gates of pearl, where there is no more night.

These few islands are not without their legendary lore, as every one is aware who has ever been honored with a seat in the stern of an old fisherman's boat, when he pulled off, in the gray dawn or evening twilight, to visit his lobster-pots, or has shared his lunch with one on the "outer reef," when hunger grew too keen even for the patience of a fisherman — legends of buccancers and smugglers; and, sooth to say, the initials of Captain Kyd, with the date of 1687, cut in the solid rock on the island that bears his name, and sworn to as authentic by the "oldest inhabitant," gives some coloring to the former, to say nothing of the great cavity excavated in the rock, and known as the famous captain's "punch-bowl."

But, whatever these islands might have been in former times, they are noted now only as pleasant places for pic-nics, and, last, but by no means least, as the best fishing-grounds in the region; and the above description, we trust, will recall to more than one reader the long summer days when, with some silent, grim-visaged old fisherman by his side, he sat in the rocking boat, and, hand-over-hand, drew in his line with its flounder-

ing, fluttering prey, or, forgetful of his sport, lay musing in the stern of the boat, until

“The charmed sunset lingered low adown
In the red west,”

and lent heart and eye and soul to the scene, until life, with its turmoils and bitter strivings, seemed foreign and accidental, and he felt, with the Lotus Eaters,

“There is no joy but calm.”

The hamlet itself is small, and, though boasting a hotel duly graced with veranda and piazza, almost every house is opened in the summer time as a boarding or lodging house, and is generally well filled, not, of course, by the most fashionable, but by quiet country parties — people of straitened means, with pale, sickly-looking children — stout, middle-aged gentlemen, who come there because their fathers did before them, who swear at the new-fangled cookery at the “Head” or “Beach,” where they go occasionally to dine with a friend, pride themselves on knowing the best fishing-grounds, call the old boatmen by the *soubriquets* which each usually bears in such a place, and make a great impression upon new comers, especially women and children. Add to these some dozen gentlemen from all quarters, amateur fishermen, genuine lovers of the hook and line, and you have a sample of the “company” which most does “congregate” at the Cove.

As to the inhabitants proper, they are an amphibious race, living equally well on land or water, keen, shrewd observers of character, not a little given to “taking in” men as well as fish, obsequious and obliging enough to strangers, but notoriously quarrelsome among themselves.

I know not whether animals of amphibious habits are more irascible and belligerent than others; but the bipeds of these hamlets are invariably given to infirmities of tem-

per, and their chief notion of liberty seems to be the right of "going to law."

Some years ago it was my fortune to spend some weeks in this place. It was in the height of "the season," and the old farm-house of our landlord, Mr. B——, was crowded with boarders, who presented the usual variety of character. Among them were three who interested me exceedingly. Two of these were a mother and daughter — quiet, reserved people, whose garments of plain, deep mourning served to confirm the rumor that they were a minister's widow and child. The mother looked like one who bore the burden of some unspoken grief; and this was in part explained when one looked on the small, delicate figure of her daughter, and noticed the deformity of the spine between the shoulders, which no art of dress could wholly conceal. They never mingled with the boarders in the common room or on the lawn, but wandered, hand in hand, alone upon the beach, or sat by the open windows of their room (which was divided from my own only by a thin pine partition), reading, sometimes the poets, Milton or Wordsworth, but oftener from the Bible, the sublime strains of David and Isaiah, or the burning words of Paul. The landlord called the mother Mrs. Davenport, and the latter addressed the child as Bertha, and that was all I knew of them.

The other person, whose presence was food for my busy mind, was Adrian Vannesse, a gentleman of some thirty-five years; at least, so I guessed, but he might have had a dozen years more or less, for his face and figure were cast in that grand, noble, almost severe mould, upon which time seems to leave no impress.

He proved to be a former acquaintance and fellow-traveller of my dear charge and young relative, Walter Aynton. They had met, a winter or two previous, in Cuba, and now renewed their acquaintance with pleasure. Indeed, Walter was delighted with this *rencontre*, and enthusiastic in his praises of

his friend, and not without reason; for Vannesse attached himself to our party, and I soon found that, to the accomplishments and varied knowledge of the man of the world, he united rare scholarly attainments, habits of deep, original thought, an earnest love for the truth, and that rare and resistless individuality which wins and commands at the same time. Tenderness equal to a woman's, too, I soon felt him to possess, when he took my young cousin under his charge, and made my office of nurse almost a sinecure. But with all these rare qualities, combined with wealth and that personal presence which is better than beauty, I felt that Adrian Vannesse lacked *something*. I could not watch him and Walter long together, without feeling that the slender boy-student, with his pale cheek and sunken eye, passing so slowly, yet, as my heart told me, so surely away from earth, was far the richer and wiser of the two, for Adrian was an infidel.

Something — I know not what — but something in his early experience had come to give strength and depth to those doubts that sooner or later beset such earnest, inquiring natures as his, and he had taken refuge in a refined species of materialism. This knowledge was an inference drawn from a series of incidental remarks, rather than from any open statement of his own; for he was no vulgar asserter of his creed, no Jesuitical proselyter, bent upon bringing every one to his views.

To Walter Aynton, pain and illness had been the angel with which he had wrestled, like Jacob of old, until he had obtained the blessing, the unspeakable blessing of perfect faith and trust in God. Thus it was, in all our conversations on life and life's ends, that all that seemed dark and intricate and contradictory, Walter trusted to God, certain that in the life beyond it would all be made clear in the "brightness of the everlasting light." But I could read no corresponding faith in the dark eyes of Vannesse — no glow of hope lit up the calm, stern features of his grandly-chiselled face.

One glorious day, as we sat beneath the shade trees on the lawn, Adrian read, in soft, deep tones, that most musical, most melancholy, because most hopeless, of all Tennyson's poems, the "Lotus Eaters;" and as he closed he repeated, more to himself than us, and as if in answer to some query of his own mind :

There is confusion worse than death ;
Trouble on trouble, pain on pain,
Long labor unto aged breath —
Sore task to hearts worn out with many wars,
And eyes grown dim with gazing on the pilot stars ;"

then added, slowly, "And this is the sum of life !"

There was something so sad, so inexpressibly hopeless, in his voice, that for a brief moment it *did* seem that this was indeed all ; then a bright glow lit up Walter's pale cheek, and he said :

"Not so, dear Vannesse. Old Ulysses teaches a higher, better doctrine than that, heathen though he be !"

And, taking the book from Adrian's hand, he read the noble poem that bears the name of the sage of Ithaca — that poem so replete with kingly dignity, self-conscious power, melancholy fortitude, and manly self-reliance, softened and beautified by the memory of joys and trials long since "lived down," but which have made him

"Strong to will,
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield."

Vannesse did not reply for some moments ; and Walter, perchance mistaking the cause of his silence, said, reaching out a thin hand that was instantly folded in that of his friend :

"Forgive me, Adrian. I have lived fewer years than you in number ; but suffering, though bitter, is a rare teacher and it seems to me uncommonly cowardly, so to speak, to doubt the existence or the goodness of God."

"I do not doubt the existence of a First Cause, Providence, Creator, God—by whatever name you choose to designate it," began Vannesse, slowly. "He must be an idiot who does that. But what is this speck of a world to an infinite being such as we conceive him? What are we, that he should stoop to interfere with our affairs, or take note of our trivialities? Your old Syriac Job felt this keenly, when he exclaimed, 'What is man, that thou shouldst magnify him; that thou shouldst set thy heart upon him; that thou shouldst visit him morning and evening, and try him every moment?' And as to his goodness and benevolence, look yonder,"—and, by a glance, he directed us to where the slight figure of Bertha Davenport was slowly toiling up from the beach,—"there is an argument to the point. What has that young girl done, to be thus cursed from her birth? Endowed, if her face does not belie her, with all woman's restless yearning for companionship, love, and yet shut off, by that organic curse, from all but woman's sorrows. Think you her *unbiased* verdict would say much for his goodness?"

For a moment Walter's face was troubled; then, as he caught the love-lighted glance which the girl lifted towards the window where her mother sat, and saw the spiritual expression of the small, sweet face, his own lighted up, and, rising and laying his hand on Adrian's shoulder, he said, earnestly:

"Indeed, I *do* think so, my friend. Once, this same thing would have troubled me; but *now I know*, Adrian; for,

'Knowledge by suffering entereth,
And life is perfected by death.'"

Chance, as he would call it, gave Adrian Vannesse an opportunity to ask these questions himself in the course of a few days, as the incident I am about to relate will show.

It was towards the last of August, when, after several weeks of extreme heat, there came one of those intensely hot

days when the earth is like one great kiln, and the very atmosphere like molten lead. The sea lay flat, motionless, pulseless, prostrated beneath the fierceness of the sun's rays; the sedges were crisped and dry and husky, as if a fire had passed over them.

There was no comfort anywhere; towards night the air, instead of growing cooler, seemed to be stiller, sultrier, more stifling, if possible, than before, and, leaving Walter on a sofa, Adrian Vannesse and I walked down to the beach. We did not gain much, for the sand scorched our eyes and our feet; besides, it was "dead low water," and the great bare, muddy flats lay reeking and steaming in the sun, in all their unsightliness; for, whatever may be true of the great ocean, I am certain that everything cast into the sea near shore does not

"Suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange."

However, we walked on, until we left the hamlet behind us, and reached a dilapidated fish-house, which served to shelter the man who acted as Charon in all our sailing and fishing expeditions. Once or twice I had penetrated into the hidden mysteries of the place, for the sake of seeing the man's bed-ridden mother—a great, gaunt skeleton of a woman, half palsied, who sat up in her bunk, sick or well, and netted seine.

The man himself was a specimen, both in a physical and psychological view, not

"Lean and lank and brown,
As is the ribbed sea sand,"

like the ancient mariner, but sturdy, and, as Vulcan himself, with a complexion like the red earth of which he was formed; neither had he the long "white beard and glittering eye," which wrought such a spell upon the luckless wedding-guest, but a beard short, and stiff, and grizzled, like a mildewed

stubble-field, and a light gray eye, overhung by massy, shaggy eyebrows. But, like to old Chaucer's "Shipman,"

"Of a nice conscience, no great care he kept;"

nor of his temper either, judging from the many stories we heard of his fierce, ungovernable rage; bursts of passion, that proved him more fit for the mad-house than elsewhere; yet his neighbors had not failed to take advantage of this infirmity, and had involved him in lawsuit after lawsuit, and given him one month's residence in the county jail after another, until he had been reduced from the ownership and mastership of a pretty schooner, to one or two pet sail-boats, and had exchanged a comfortable home for this miserable shelter, in which, with his old mother and his only remaining child, a bright-eyed boy of ten, he contrived to weather out summer and winter.

One redeeming trait of manhood he had kept through all—he was always true to his word, and on all our expeditions he was punctual to a minute. For the rest, to quote again from Chaucer:

"In his own craft to reckon well the tides,
The sea's deep currents and the shoals besides,
The sun's height, and the moon's, and pilotage,
There was none such from Hull unto Carthage."

Now he sat on a decayed piece of timber without the hut, with his tarpaulin jammed down upon his head, and his red flannel shirt-sleeves rolled up above his elbows, splicing a parted rope. Adrian exchanged a word or two with him about their plans for the next morning, and we passed on to where the lee of a rocky point promised some hope of shelter from the sun. Here we sat, and pertinaciously called up visions of icebergs and Polar seas, of wintry shipwrecks and frozen mariners, not forgetting

“The schooner Hesperus,
That sailed the wintry sea,
And the skipper who took his little daughter,
To bear him companie.”

But it was in vain; we could not even raise an imaginary breeze. The pale, coppery sky seemed to shut down closer and closer over us, and we could only sit and laugh at our own folly. At length there came one or two slight puffs of air from the westward, and Adrian, who was well versed in the signs of the weather, suggested that we should go home before the storm overtook us.

I laughed at the idea of a storm; but, helping me up the rocks which had sheltered us on the west, he pointed to where, all along the western sky, from the horizon towards the zenith, stretched fine lines of pale yellow light, saying:

“Look; there is the proof of my words; and, see,” he continued, climbing to the highest point, which gave us an outlook beyond the range of hills to the north and west, “there it comes, in good earnest.”

And all along the west stretched a cloud, black as night, save where its beautifully-curved edge was bordered with a strip of clear silvery hue.

“We shall hardly have time to reach home,” observed Adrian, as he watched its rapid strides up the western sky.

Still we lingered, in awe and admiration, until, lighting up its edge for a few moments with a richer splendor, the sun disappeared beneath it, and its black shadow fell on land and sea. Then came the muttered thunder, followed by the crinkling lightning. There was a pause, while the light streak near the horizon rapidly widened, and the ocean moaned and rocked in long, undulating swells; and then came a roar as of many waters — a rush as of the wings of mighty winds — and the storm was upon us; not of mere rain-drops, but a thick, blinding, bewildering spray and mist, driven before the fiercest of winds.

Adrian Vannesse drew his strong arm about me, and started for the fisherman's hut, the only accessible shelter; but he proceeded only a few paces, before he stopped short, exclaiming, in a tone of horror:

"Good God! what madness!"

And, following the direction of his glance, I saw, through the thick mist and spray, for one moment, the white sail of a boat, a few rods distant from the rocky point we had just left—for one moment; then came a loud, shrill, fearful cry of agony and deathly fear, swelling above the storm; and the boat, and he who uttered it, went down beneath the leaping waves.

"Make for the hut!" shouted Adrian Vannesse.

And the next moment I was alone, and he, followed by another wild, bareheaded figure, that came rushing along the beach, had dashed into the surf.

I did not heed the storm, scarcely moved or breathed, until Vannesse emerged from the water, followed by our old boatman, bearing in his arms a human body; then I fled to the hut, and reached it in time to see them enter, and lay down upon the floor the body of the boatman's only son. The man looked at no one, heeded no one, nor even replied to his old mother's scream of terror; but, lifting the lad's head to his knee, wrung the water from the tangled, sun-burned locks, and chafed the cold, wet hands.

"Hold your tongue, mother!" he cried, at last. "There's life in the lad yet! Get up, you old fool, and gi'e me the blanket, can't ye?"

"O! Dave, Dave, man! the lad never 'll breathe again—he's clean gone!" screamed the old woman; but he cut her short with a volley of curses, and, with a sudden jerk, drew the ragged coverlet from beneath her old bones, and wrapped it round the child.

Adrian Vannesse knelt on the earthen floor, and lent all his aid to assist the father in his efforts to resuscitate the body

— but in vain. At length, pointing to a dark bruise on his temple, he said :

“ My poor friend, this is useless. Your boy will never speak or move again. He is dead ! ”

“ Not speak again ! — not move, — my Billy, — the handiest, smartest lad on the whole cove, — dead ! ” said the man, dreamingly. “ You lie ! ” he shouted, turning suddenly upon Vannesse ; “ he never minded a ducking, — he a’n’t dead ! ” and he again set to chafing the stiffened limbs.

Adrian did not reply otherwise than by placing the miserable father’s hand over the pulseless heart. The man drew back with a start and a shudder that ran through his giant frame ; then, sinking down on the floor, he sat gazing into the child’s pale, open face with a look of vacant, dumb misery.

“ Dead ! dead ! He ’ll never hail the skiff again, — never. O, my boy ! my boy ! ” and the groans of the strong man in his agony were mingled with the raging of the storm.

Suddenly the old woman raised herself up, and said, in a tone that was a strange blending of childishness and authority,

“ It’s the hand o’ God, Davy — the hand o’ God ! ”

“ Then why did n’t he take you, you old worthless hulk, or me, who am good for nothing but to die ; and not the laughin’, happy boy ? ” said the miserable man, angrily. “ Ah, Billy, lad, — the last o’ ten, — all gone ! all gone ! — gone where ? ” he muttered, as if a new thought were struggling in upon his grief. Then turning to Adrian Vannesse, he seized his arm, and said, eagerly :

“ Ye are a larned man, sir, an’ I believe a good un ! I’ve heard ye and tother un readin’ an’ talkin’ in outlandish tongues, sech as the likes o’ me don’t understand, an’ ye know a great many things, — say, where is my boy gone ? Shall I ever see him agin ? ”

And he, — the all-accomplished man of the world, the rare scholar, the deep thinker, who prided himself on the strength of his reason, and boasted that man’s intellect was sufficient

for his wants,—stood dumb before the mighty mystery of Death! Among all his fine-wrought arguments and subtleties of the intellect, there was not one which could give comfort to that wretched, questioning father, or lift his bruised spirit above the lifeless lump of clay at his feet!

“It’s a’ in the Bible, man,” muttered the old crone. “Surely, Dave, I gin ye good schoolin’ in the days long sin’.”

“Ay, and bad enough sin’, mother!” murmured the man; “so it is e’en as broad as ’t is long;” and again he bent his deep, earnest gaze upon Vannesse. But, before his lips could utter again the startling, “Where is he gone?” a slight figure, with dripping black garments clinging to her delicate limbs, and long, golden curls streaming over her shoulders, came softly from a remote corner of the room, and, laying her small white hand on the arm of the giant boatman, said, earnestly, in low, silvery tones, that seemed somehow to carry with them conviction:

“He has gone to God, sir;—*that*,” pointing to the lifeless body, “is only the form, the shell, in which your little boy lived while here. Now, he has gone home to our Father in heaven, where there is neither sin, nor sorrow, nor pain.”

The bereaved father looked straight into the clear, angel face of the young girl, full a moment, before he replied:

“If he is our Father, Miss, and good as you say, why did he let him die? I would n’t ’a let him.”

“That you may be the more willing to follow him, perhaps,” said the girl. “Tell me,” she went on; “you have lived a long time; has life been so very pleasant?—would you bring him back to live just the life you have lived?”

The man turned his thoughtful glance from her face to that of the dead, a moment, before he replied.

“No; if He is good as you say, he is better off there. But

shall I ever see him agin, Miss ? Is it true, what them parsons say ? ” he added, anxiously.

“ Yes, you shall see him, if you obey God, for you ‘ shall go to him, but he shall return no more to you, ’ ” was the quiet answer ; and then, in that low, sweet tone, she went on to speak of God — not as the Unknown, the Infinite, over whose essence and attributes philosophers lose themselves in a waste of words, but as the all-wise, all-good Father — and of the Son, who “ carrieth the lambs in his bosom,” to whom even the most poor and ignorant may come, and find pardon and peace.

Adrian Vannesse never forgot that lesson. With Bertha Davenport leaning on his other arm, we walked home after the tempest had spent its fury, and learned how she, too, had been caught in the storm, and forced to seek shelter in the fisherman’s hut ; but he said little or nothing until we reached the porch of our temporary home. Then, taking her hand, and baring his head, as if in reverence, he said :

“ Pardon me, Miss Davenport, and do me the justice to believe that I ask from no idle motive. But this religious faith of yours, tell me, has it brought you rest ? Is it sufficient for all times and seasons ? ”

The sweet, child-like face was raised to his a moment, in surprise ; then, pointing to where the black clouds rolled in jagged masses over the western sky, she said :

“ There come days and hours, in all lives, — certainly in mine, — when clouds and thick darkness are about us, like those yonder ; but I know that behind them shines the sure sun of God’s love ; and I have peace, — deep and abiding peace.”

And, surely, no one who looked upon that serene, thoughtful face, could doubt it.

Adrian Vannesse, like many another thoughtful soul, after suffering grievous temptations, is now a preacher of

God's truth ; and when doubt or discouragement beset him, as they sometimes will, he has only to look down into the clear eyes of her whom he once thought born only as the heritor of woman's sorrows, to read there a never-failing evangel of faith and hope, as he whispers the sweet, fond words, " My wife."

DEATH BY THE WAY-SIDE.

A SKETCH.

"Never before had the forests of America witnessed such a sight. Never again was there such a pilgrimage from the sea-side 'to the delightful banks of the Connecticut!'" — BANCROFT.

SUCH is the language of the eloquent historian, with reference to the journey of that band of pilgrims, who, in the pleasant spring-time of 1636, turned their backs upon such vestiges of comfort and civilization as the infant settlements of Massachusetts Bay afforded, and, headed by their beloved pastor, the Rev. Thomas Hooker, made their way through perils innumerable, across swamps and streams, over rough and rocky highlands, and through tangled woods and deep green valleys, with no guide but a compass, and no shelter but the heavens, until, like the Israelites of old, they crossed the "goodlie river," and upon its western bank raised their altars, and laid the foundation of the pleasant city of Hartford.

And he is right. More than two hundred years have elapsed, and "companies by fifties and by hundreds" of New England's sons, with their wives and their little ones, have gone forth from her rugged hills and sheltered valleys, to seek a richer reward for their labor amid the fertile prairies of the West, or by the golden-bedded streams of California; yet, in character and influence, in that true courage which lifts the soul above fear, — a courage, thank God! not dependent on thews and sinews, but growing out of a firm adherence to God

and the right, and which inspires the heart of the feeblest woman, as well as the strongest man, — in all that goes to make up true moral grandeur, none can compare with this.

It is not without significance that the old writers speak of this company, as consisting of “about one hundred *souls*.” They were not mere *bodies*, seeking a new field for the gratification of animal appetites and pleasures, but *souls*, with ends and aims that took hold on eternity, and who faced famine and death, not for worldly gain, but that they might obtain liberty to give an external development to those truths which had already made them free in spirit. In proof of this, we need only adduce the fact, that, in all succeeding emigration of their descendants, the seeds of whatever they have carried with them that is truest, best, most ennobling, — that which gives *vitality* to their institutions, — may be traced back to our early fathers; and even now they move us with a sway mightier than any living influence.

No. The world, even, counts few pilgrimages like that! That there will yet arise prophets and disciples dowered with a fuller and clearer knowledge of the truth, we earnestly trust and believe; yet these men shall not die; or, rather, like Abel, being dead, they shall yet speak, and their voices vibrate along the chain of existence until time is no more.

It was toward the close of a rare day in June, that the pilgrims from a ridge of wooded highlands caught their first, faint glimpse of the beautiful river. Many a hill and valley, swamp and morass, lay between; but then it was like a narrow silver thread on a ground of green, and, after a moment's almost breathless silence, there arose an irrepressible shout — a clear old English shout — that woke the sleeping echoes for miles around.

These had scarcely died away, when, in tones deep and clear; as a bell, Mr. Hooker gave voice to the sentiment of the whole company, in the eloquent words of King David:

"O, give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good : for his mercy endureth forever.

"Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.

"They wandered in the wilderness, in a solitary way ; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

"Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

"And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

"O that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men !"

At the foot of that wooded range of hills lay a beautiful valley, and there they halted for the night. It was a striking scene, that halt between the hills, and one well worthy of the artist's pencil.

The wild, luxuriant beauty of the landscape, over which neither scythe nor sickle, plough nor axe, had as yet passed ; the flush of life that trembled along the hills, and throbbed and thrilled in everything around them ; the hum of the myriad insect tribes, the strange birds sitting still on the boughs, and pouring out their evening songs of rare and wondrous melody ; the occasional cries of wild beasts that their coming had aroused from their lairs, mingled with the unwonted lowing of one hundred and sixty head of cattle which the pilgrims had driven before them, and upon whose milk they had chiefly subsisted during the journey, now greedily satisfying their hunger upon the fresh green grass of the valley, while the milkers went among them, filling their pails, preparatory to the evening meal. Here, a party of men, some of whom but a short time before had been the pride of England's oldest university, stood, axe in hand, cutting down branches of the fragrant birch, or thick-leaved maple, while another arranged them into huts and couches for the shelter

and comfort of the women and children. There, a group were busy unloading the few pack-horses that carried their extra stores, while, like a second Prometheus, the accomplished owner of Copford Hall, and ex-governor of Massachusetts, John Haynes, might be seen with tinder-box, steel and flint, in hand, kindling the fires so necessary to protect them from wild beasts, as well as cook their hasty pudding, and parch their quota of Indian corn. Two crotched sticks, supporting a good, stout pole, from which swung an iron pot, answered all the purposes of a fireplace; and around these clustered the busy-handed matrons, not a few of them the cherished daughters of wealth and ease, watching the seething, bubbling contents of the vessels, or tending their infants in the shade; while rosy-cheeked maidens brought water in wooden dippers, or gourd shells, from a crystal spring, that bubbled up beneath the roots of a wide-spreading birch, near which stood the revered pastor himself,—that “light of the western churches,” whose eloquence had drawn people from all parts of the County of Essex to hear him, ere he was silenced for non-conformity,—folding the broad leaves of the hickory into drinking-cups for the fair-haired, blue-eyed lambs of his flock, that had gathered round him to slake their thirst; while in the background rose the dark-wooded hills, and above them arched the deep, unclouded sky of June.

Not far from the spring, under the shade of a magnificent oak, were two huts, built of branches like the rest, but constructed with far more care, for it seemed as if every one of the company had been anxious to do something towards perfecting their arrangement. One was occupied by Madame Hooker and her family, and near the opening of the other reclined a fragile-looking girl, with hair like a floating cloud at sunset, and eyes deep, serene and clear, as the cloudless sky above her. This was Maude, the young wife of Geoffrey

Winstanley, whose youth, gentleness, and failing health, made her an object of peculiar interest to every heart.

"She had scarcely recovered from the effects of her sea-voyage, when they started on their pilgrimage, and it had been too much for her, poor thing," the matrons said, "but the quiet and comfort of the settlement would soon set her up again;" and her husband listened to them eagerly, and repeated their words to himself, as if by so doing he could silence the terrible misgivings that haunted him.

Now, the little children brought bunches of luscious strawberries, to tempt the appetite of their favorite, and win from her one of those sweet smiles, which they had learned to prize higher than words; and their elders, as they passed, paused to congratulate her on their nearness to their journey's end — alas, they little knew how true it was in her case! — and to speak words of hope and comfort; but some there were who, as they gazed upon her face, and noted that clear, transparent look, that gave it such a peculiar beauty, turned away with a silent prayer for her and her husband; for they knew that, like all the highest beauty of earth, it was but a reflex from that unseen land towards which she was hastening.

"Ripening for eternity!" said Mr. Hooker, when, after evening prayers, he turned from the side of the young invalid, with a fervent blessing, and sought the presence of his wife.

"Our gentle Maude is almost done with the things of earth!"

"And Geoffrey, poor Geoffrey!" murmured his wife. "How will he ever bear it? Even but now he hath spoken to me of renewed hope."

Mr. Hooker did not answer; but, as he stood watching the noble, manly figure of Geoffrey Winstanley, as he bent over his young wife, — now arranging the bear-skins upon which she reclined, with a tenderness and anxiety that seemed never

satisfied, now pulling back the rich waves of hair that fell too heavily over her cheek,—and thought of the dread trial that awaited him, all the human stirred within him, and he, too, murmured, “Poor Geoffrey!”

There had been a time when he and many others had heard, with surprise and regret, that Geoffrey Winstanley, with his strong will, clear intellect, and sincerely religious heart, had become the thrall of a young beauty of sixteen, the favorite niece of the haughty rector of Swindon, and that he lingered in England in the hope of making her his wife. They felt ready to say to him, in the words of Manoa to Samson, “Is there no woman among the daughters of thy brethren, nor among all thy people, that thou goest to take a wife of the uncircumcised Philistines?”

But when she stood among them as his wife, and they heard how, for the sake of the proscribed Puritan, she had braved the anger and persecution of her relatives,—when they saw the tenderness, meekness, and reverence, with which she looked up to all her husband’s friends,—the heart of the most rigid warmed towards her; and with Mr. Hooker’s family she soon became “our gentle Maude.” As the good man thought of all this, and of her gentle yet earnest faith, and the many times within the past few weeks when he had visited her in his capacity of teacher, and came away a learner, his heart smote him for his injustice.

He was, indeed, right. Under the combined teaching of Love and Death, Maude Winstanley was ripening for eternity. Once she had resolutely shut her heart against even the thought of the latter, it seemed so impossible that death could reach her, shielded by Geoffrey’s love and sheltered in his arms. But as the weeks went on, deepening the symptoms of that fatal disease that steals upon its victims silently as autumn steals upon the hills, and robes them with a beauty which is not of this world, her heart awoke to a deeper insight of spiritual truth; the high doctrines so often discussed

between her husband and her pastor grew clearer to her understanding, and bore fruit for eternity.

Still, the human was strong within her; and there came moments — especially when she felt the deep eyes of her husband looking down upon her with such an expression of unutterable love and sorrow, and his strong frame shake with agony if she did but breathe of what awaited them — when her lips trembled and her heart shrunk shudderingly from the thought of the grave and the winding-sheet — when earth with him seemed better than heaven without him.

Do not blame her too severely, thou of stronger faith, but remember, she was but a gentle, loving girl, and wisdom and faith grow but slowly in this sphere of ours. If you have met a trial like this with more unwavering faith, thank God for it; or, if as yet the bitter cup has not been presented to your lips, still thank God, — for it is of his mercy alone, — but blame her not.

God did not, but gave to her heart that assurance, without which immortality itself would be but a cheat — the blessed assurance that affection dies not with the breath; that in a little while, a few brief days at most, that love, freed from the stains and impurities of earth, should again beam on her from those beloved eyes, and those arms once more fold her in their pure, holy embrace.

And Geoffrey Winstanley, while he gazed into her spiritual eyes, and listened to her low, earnest tones, as she poured forth for his comfort those blessed intuitions, felt the gnawing pain at his heart grow still, but only to return with tenfold power when they ceased, and he found himself alone.

That was no boyish fancy that had led him to linger behind his friends in England, and meet their looks of grave reproof, for the sake of Maude Edgerton. He had left the first flush of youth some years behind, when she stole in upon the unsunned side of his heart, and gave to life a new, and, to him, undreamed of beauty and significance.

He had been an orphan from childhood, and the influences under which he had grown to manhood had not failed, while they strengthened and developed to the utmost his mental and moral energies, to deepen the natural reserve of his character, until even those who knew him best had little conception of the earnest enthusiasm, the boundless capacity for affection, that lay concealed beneath his calm, grave, almost stern, exterior. Earnest, truthful, noble, and sincerely religious, he yet lacked that feminine influence so necessary to man's highest development: to temper justice with mercy, energy with softness, inflexibility with grace, and render his whole character symmetrical and in harmony with the Divine Ideal.

This had been Maude's mission; and could he part with her now, when life first seemed blossoming to completeness — when each hour brought some new, delicious joy, of which his solitary youth had been defrauded? Could he lay that head down in the grave, whose every golden tress was dearer to him than life, and, looking calmly up, say, "Thy will be done?"

Not without a struggle, the bitterness of which few even dreamed, for his was not a nature that manifested its emotions in those wild paroxysms which pass with most people for evidences of profound feeling; it was rather like the ocean, when the fury of the tempest has beaten the waves to an apparent calm, and none can judge of the wild commotion below, save those who have felt its power. It is strange how we misjudge the hearts of men in this world, and call that coldness and indifference which is simply the tranquillity resulting from intense power!

"It is written, 'Thou shalt not make unto thyself idols,'" Mr. Hooker had said, half seriously and half playfully, one day, to Geoffrey, as he marked the peculiar expression with which he watched the movements of his young wife; and he had been startled at the intense feeling that trembled in his

voice, as, pointing to where she sat, soothing the feverish fretfulness of the minister's youngest child, he replied, "It hath also been said, beware lest ye 'entertain angels unawares.'"

The sight of the beautiful river, which had spread such joy through the band, had not failed to stir the deep enthusiasm of Geoffrey Winstanley's nature; and, as that clear June day deepened into twilight, he sat by the side of Maude in that sylvan tent, and spoke, with the heart of a poet and the eye of a prophet, of their future home, and the mighty destiny that should yet wait on their humble efforts.

Maude listened long and in silence; then, summoning all her God-given strength, she spoke to him of the home that awaited her, not with him, on the banks of the beautiful Connecticut, but by that river of life whose stream makes glad the city of God.

She did not need to look up in his face; for the trembling of the arm that encircled her, and the large, burning tear-drop that fell on her forehead, spoke plainly of the agony her words had awoke within him. They seemed to have changed natures — that high-hearted, calm, grave man, and the yielding, fragile maiden; but, as she kept on, there was something so serene in her faith, so holy in the calm resignation with which she spoke of death, so exalting in her views of the life beyond, that he was lifted above himself; and, leaning his head on those golden locks, he poured out all his selfish struggles, and told how for weeks past he had been ready to struggle with God to retain her still on earth.

"Earth! what is earth, my husband?" she replied; "but a few short years of troubled joy at best; and what is this, compared with that rest which remaineth for the children of God? That rest will soon be mine; and there I shall await you. You will not fail to meet me there, beloved."

"God aiding me, I will not. In this hope, and with this aim, I shall live and die," he replied, fervently.

For a few moments there was silence between them, while the grateful evening breeze stirred the leafy covering of their hut, and let in the soft June moonlight, that fell like a halo of glory over the golden locks of the invalid. A smile fluttered round her mouth; then a strange tremor for a brief second shook her whole frame, and struck an icy chill to the husband's heart; for, with that passing moonbeam, the spirit of Maude Winstanley swept upward from the earth.

O, death! death! death! thou masked angel, whom our tear-dimmed eyes cannot unveil; thou fearful void, which reason cannot fathom; thou icy silence, which love cannot break; thou dread pause, which no earthly power can fill — blessed, thrice blessed is he who can hear through the darkness and desolation, the sorrow and the anguish that wait upon thy footsteps, the voice of Him, who, by that fresh grave in Bethany, of erst sanctified human grief, whispering, "Lo! it is I — be not afraid!"

Not there — O, not there, with that beloved form stiffening in his arms, and that heavy, benumbing sense of sorrow weighing down upon his heart — not when, with kiss after kiss upon that cold brow, he resigned her to the care of the weeping women who had gathered round, and rushed out into the night — not when the hand of Mr. Hooker grasped his in true and silent sympathy, could Geoffrey Winstanley hear *that* voice! But when, in the deep watches of the night, he knelt alone by the side of his dead, then it fell upon his heart like an echo of *her* voice, only far sweeter and more heavenly, and that icy silence grew tremulous, as with the slow beat of an angel's wings. * * *

They buried her "by the way," as Jacob buried Rachel; but they "set up no pillar upon her grave." Her initials, cut in the smooth bark of a young birch that overhung her grave, were the only memorial that marked the spot where slept all that was mortal of Maude Winstanley.

LITTLE BESSIE.

PART I.

It was the last morning of the old year. The cold was intense; the dense leaden-hued clouds that covered the heavens were burdened with snow, and the earth beneath was frozen almost as hard as a miser's heart. The chilling north-east wind, as it whistled through old passages and round sharp corners, seemed laden with the last breath of frozen mariners, who sit death-bound and ice-bound on board their motionless ships in the far northern seas, waiting the coming of our Lord.

Ugh! it was freezing cold, and old Mrs. Lyman's hands shook like brown withered leaves in autumn, as she tied the hood and folded the blanket around the shoulders of her grand-daughter, Bessie, preparatory to sending her forth to gather material to replenish their wasting fire. But little Bessie's blood was warm and quick; besides, her thoughts were so divided between the new mittens (not knit of nice red yarn, reader, like the pair you remember, but made out of bits of red flannel), which grandmother had finished for her the night before, and the nice, white chips that Esquire Brown's men had left in the Hill-side woods, and given her permission to gather, that she did not mind the cold nor notice the unusual tremor in her grandmother's hands.

But when the old lady placed a slice of bread in her basket, saying she would need it to keep out the cold, something in her voice attracted the child's attention. She gazed anxiously

in the pale, sorrowful face that bent over her, then taking the bread from the basket, eyed it closely.

"Grandmother," she said, "this is the slice I brought out for your breakfast. You have eaten nothing to-day. Are you ill, grandmother?"

"No, my child."

"Then, why did you not eat it? Surely," she continued, as if struck by some sudden thought, "we have food enough to last until to-morrow, when I shall carry in the work to Mr. G——, and get the pay. There is the piece of bread and the bit of fish — and" —

"Ay, little Bessie, you are no fairy, to turn stones into bread," said the old lady, with a faint smile. "Your list is soon told. Besides, you forget that there is a storm coming up, and you may not be able to go to town for some days. In that case, we must make what we have last as well as we can."

The little girl stood for a moment gazing vacantly out the window, while her great blue eyes filled with tears. Suddenly her whole face lighted up; she dashed away the tears, and, pointing to a pair of little brown snow-birds hopping about on the withered branches of catnip that grew beneath the window, in search of seeds, said:

"See, grandmother, God feeds them! He will not let us starve."

"Right, child. May He forgive my want of faith," replied the grandmother, fervently. "Now go, Bessie, and I will meet you at the foot of the hill, and help you home with your basket."

Grandmother Lyman and little Bessie had not always been so poor; but, as the old lady expressed it, things had been going wrong with them ever since poor John, Bessie's father, was crushed by the falling of a portion of the building on which he was at work. After some months of suffering, God took him home; and it was not long before his heart-broken

young wife followed him, leaving little on earth, save the orphan Bessie. True, Mrs. Lyman had another son, many years older than Bessie's father, who had left her, while yet a boy, to gratify his passion for the sea. Though she had not heard from him for many years, she was not certain of his death; therefore, whenever the great storms arose, and there came frightful tales of shipwreck and death, her mother-heart buried him again.

After John and his wife were laid in the grave, Poverty began to look in upon her, in the shape of doctor's, apothecary's, and grocer's bills; but the courageous old soul faced him bravely, until fever and rheumatism lent their aid to the foe, when she was obliged to yield.

When she recovered, in some degree, the use of her limbs, she found that, in order to satisfy her creditors, she must give up the humble but comfortable home whose very walls and floors were written all over to her with household records, and find a shelter for herself and Bessie elsewhere.

Many of the neighbors were disposed to assist her, and some of the most excitable did not hesitate to say that the doctor and grocer were well able to give in the old widow's bills; but she reminded them that the doctor had two invalid sisters to assist, and that among the grocer's large family there was one poor little crippled boy, for whom it would be necessary to make some extra provision. Ah! Grandmother Lyman was a thoughtful old soul — thoughtful of every one before herself! Some there were who talked of the poor-house, and said she would be compelled to make up her mind to it at last; but these were very few, for most of the people sympathized with that feeling of self-respect (some call it pride), which leads our New England population to submit to many privations ere they accept the bread of public charity.

A kind farmer offered her the old house in which we found them, rent free. True, it stood in a solitary place, quite

away from neighbors; but, then, it was in close proximity to the "Seahill woods," where they had permission to gather as much dry wood as they pleased. Besides, as the old lady was wont to observe, "Our trials and our blessings walk hand in hand," and as her infirmities increased, so did little Bessie's strength. She was soon able to go to the village after their slight stores, or such coarse sewing and knitting as her grandmother's rheumatic hands were able to manage. Lately, a kind lady had procured employment for them at one of the cheap clothing stores that abound in the city of H——. Though the remuneration was the merest pittance, yet the old lady's thankful spirit magnified it to quite a fortune; moreover, it afforded her the means of teaching little Bessie to sew, and she was already able to stitch and cross-stitch the long seams in the coarse shirts and drawers of which their work consisted, when we introduced her to our readers.

The only drawback to this god-send was the long walks it obliged the child to take. H—— was five good miles distant from their home, and their employer a man of method, who insisted on having the work brought in punctually at the given time, else it would be given to some other half-starved seeker in this great granary of God. Bessie did not mind the distance in the warm weather, for then the birds sung marches for her in the green meadows—now slower; now faster—and the flowers sprang up through the turf by the way-side, and made a rich carpet for her little feet even to the entrance of the city. But she could never quite overcome the feeling of loneliness and dread that came over her when she stood within that long, gloomy store in F—— street, and heard the owner's cold, abrupt, "Well, child, your grandmother is punctual, I see;" and in the cold winter it required all the sunshine that the little girl had garnered into her heart during the long summer, to brighten the way.

After this long digression, we will only add, that the last lot of work was done, and must be sent in on the morrow, or

the next day at the farthest, and leave Mrs. Lyman to prepare it for the inspection of Mr. G——, while we follow little Bessie to the woods.

Bravely she breasted the keen north-east wind, occasionally turning to get breath and draw her scanty blanket more closely about her, while the withered herbage, coated with white frost, crumpled beneath her little feet, as if a giant pressed it.

When she reached the brook where the path turned into the woods, she did not pause as usual to watch the nodding bulrushes, now jewelled and gemmed by the frost-like fairy wands, nor stop to catch a nearer glimpse of the wondrous "architecture of the brooklet's winter palace;" for her young heart was very, very sad. The more she thought of their scanty stores, and her grandmother's pale, wan face, the more deeply she reproached herself for certain deeds of which she had been guilty, and which now, seen through the chilling atmosphere of want, seemed like wanton extravagance. During the autumn, she had spent whole days in the woods in search of nuts. On these occasions she had often shared her little parcel of dinner with a large, half-famished dog that belonged to a poor drunken pedler that lived at the distance of a mile or more on the opposite side of the hill. It was thought that the man had stolen the animal in some of his excursions, for, instead of taking kindly to his master, he wandered about the woods in search of game, where he made the acquaintance of little Bessie. At first, the child was somewhat afraid of her shaggy acquaintance, but he soon found means to convince her of his honesty, and a warm friendship grew up between them. For hours, old Jack would lie by her basket while she wandered from tree to tree, occasionally lifting his head from between his paws, and looking round to assure himself of her safety, and woe to the mischievous boy that dared to approach her basket! Bessie, whose heart overflowed with love for everything, was delighted with her new friend, and had no other means of manifesting her

sense of his preference than by sharing with him her dinner. True, the meal was rather scant for two, and we know some people, ay, and dogs, too, who would have taken exception at the quality as well as the quantity; but Bessie and Jack could not afford to be very fastidious.

Though the child had often spoken of her friend Jack to her grandmother, she had not ventured to acknowledge him as the sharer of her dinner, from a kind of misgiving that the old lady would not think it quite right. It was this question that now troubled the little girl's mind. Benevolence said that she had done right — her self-denial had saved the life of the poor animal; but selfishness pointed to the meagre bit of bread in the cupboard, and whispered that the food should have been laid aside against the day of want. So busy was the little girl with this point of ethics, that she did not hear the pattering of old Jack's feet, nor see him, until he rubbed his shaggy coat against her side, and poked his cold nose under her hood, as she bent over her basket.

They had not met for several days, and the poor dog's joy was unbounded. And well he might be glad to see Bessie's friendly face, for the marks of the rope on his chafed and bleeding leg, and of the whip on his sides, proved that the faces he had met of late had been anything but friendly. Poor Bessie! Her resolutions of prudence were not proof against the mute eloquence of Jack's looks, and the next moment the slice of bread was drawn forth from the wrapper, and by far the largest part laid before her old friend, with the half-uttered thought, "Poor old fellow, perhaps I shall not have anything to give you again in a great while!"

PART II.

The New Year of 184— made his *entree* in the midst of festivities, and greeted his subjects with a clear, bright face. True, there were signs of a frown hovering over his brow,

that, to those accustomed to study such things, hinted of wild storms; and some of his poorer subjects shuddered, and declared that his breath was even colder than the dying breath of his predecessor; but their murmurs were drowned amid the joyous shouts with which their more fortunate brethren greeted his accession. The present custom — which requires ladies to keep the house on New-Year's day, in order to receive the calls of their male acquaintance — was not very prevalent in H—— at the time of which we speak; therefore the streets had not quite so much of a Turkish look as at the present day. The long vista of Main-street presented a joyous sight to old and young, with its groups of restless, happy beings thronging in every direction. Here were troops of impatient little urchins, with cheeks redder than the scarlet linings of their cloaks, returning from the toy-shops with their quota of gilded and sugared trifles; then a half-dozen tall, slender school-girls, their pale cheeks flushing, half in anger, half in pleasure, at the admiring glances of clerks and students; young fathers, with still younger-looking mothers leaning on their arms, followed by giggling boys and girls, pausing to chat with some old acquaintance equally happy and equally blest; while the children astonished each other by an account of their New-Year's gifts, and the lots of marbles they intended to purchase; while sober, discreet matrons, and silver-haired, benign-looking gentlemen, mindful of the time when they were young, passed by with a glance of pleasure and a silent "God bless you."

Ah, it was a very pleasant sight! and so little Bessie Lyman thought, when, wearied by her long walk, and benumbed with the cold, she emerged from the sunless atmosphere of North Main-street into the great thoroughfare of the city. It seemed to the child as if the air was warmer there, for the rays of the noonday sun fell brightly on the pavements, and were reflected from the plate-glass windows that lined the street; and the feeling was deepened by the sight

of so many gay and happy faces. Happiness is contagious, and blessed be God that it is so! else little Bessie Lyman's fate would have been harder still, — for very few among all that gay throng noticed the poorly clad little figure that stole along close to the side-wall, as if she felt herself an intruder; yet her heart gathered in all the stray smiles and multiplied them by that wondrous process unknown to any save children, until she almost forgot her cold and weariness; and the happy greetings of the New Year, that sprang from lip to lip up and down the wide street, seemed addressed to her, and fell upon her heart like a blessing. But when she left that broad avenue, and entered F—— street, the cold breeze from the ice-bound river almost took away her breath, and at the thought of the long, gloomy store, and the unsympathizing faces there, she shuddered, and the numbness again crept over her heart. A few moments' walk brought her to the door, and, timidly swinging it back, she entered and placed her basket of work on the counter. One glance showed her that there was no one in the store but a young boy, who stood at the further end, arranging some goods. He advanced towards her, and, feeling encouraged at the sight of his round, good-humored face, she told her errand freely.

The boy took the work from the basket, counting the number of pieces as he did so. "All right," he said, glancing at the bill which the old lady had placed in the basket. "Two dozen pair, at sixpence per pair, amount to just two dollars. Do you want the money to-day, little girl?"

"If you please, sir."

"Then I am sorry you did not get here a little earlier. Mr. G—— and all the rest have gone home, and left me to close the store, for we are to have a half-holiday," he replied, looking up in her face for the first time, as if he was sure she would sympathize with his pleasure; but one glance at her cold cheeks and eyes filled with tears sufficed to change his mood, and he said, earnestly, "I forgot; you must be very

cold, little girl. Come up to the stove and warm yourself. I was half frozen myself while building fires this morning."

"Thank you, I *am* cold; but—but don't you think you can pay me for the work? We need this money so much," she said, eagerly.

"I don't think I can. I never meddle with the accounts; but stop—Mr. G—— was talking with Deacon S—— a moment since, just up the street. Perhaps they are there yet," he continued, going to the door and looking out. "Yes, there they are by his own door. If you make haste you can catch him before he goes into the house."

In a second little Bessie was hurrying up the street, while the young clerk turned to his work, saying:

"How much she looks like Fanny Lewis; and Fan was the prettiest girl in the whole school."

The girl's nimble feet soon brought her to the place where the gentlemen were standing; but when she saw how busily they were talking, she felt tempted to pass on without speaking. But the thought of her grandmother's trembling hands and their scanty store gave her courage. She paused near the door-step, and waited an opportunity to prefer her claim. Here also the sunbeams fell brightly, and the sound of sweet voices and merry laughter reached her from the parlor, and occasionally the bright, rosy faces of children were pressed against the plate-glass windows, the very pictures of mirth and happiness. There was such an air of comfort about the house that little Bessie could not help being infected by it. She began to dream bright pictures of the nice supper that she and grandmother should have when she reached home with her parcels of tea and sugar; and, while she is thus occupied, let us turn a while to the conversation of the gentlemen. They were both men who take a very active interest in the various benevolent societies of the day; and, as their conversation related to the condition of the heathen

and the success of missions, there will be no impropriety in our acting as reporter.

"We have indeed great reason to rejoice in the success of our operations," remarked Deacon S——. "The political changes of the last year have given us access to many fields hitherto closed against us. But, unfortunately, we cannot profit by this great dispensation; for, unless some great and extra exertions are made to relieve the board of its embarrassments, we shall be obliged to curtail instead of extending our operations. The disbursements of the last year have exceeded the receipts by many thousand dollars."

"A most unfortunate state of affairs, truly," replied Mr. G——; "and, what is worse, the apathy that marks the public mind throughout the country, on this subject, is truly deplorable. Something must be done at once; we must be more strenuous in our efforts—more self-denying. Much more can be done in our own church and society than has been. I feel my own remissness in this respect; and"—

"With as little reason as any man in the society," blandly interrupted Deacon S——. "We all know that no collector ever leaves your office empty-handed. But what have we here?" he continued, directing the attention of his friend to the child.

"Some street beggar, of course," replied Mr. G——. "What are you doing here, child?" he asked, sharply.

"Please, sir," began the child, drawing from her mitten the somewhat time-stained paper, on which the trembling hand of Grandmother Lyman had made out the bill, and holding it forth—"Please, sir"—

But Mr. G——, with an impatient gesture, interrupted her. "Put up your paper, child," he said, sternly. "I never read petitions. They are mere impositions,—and you, child, are old enough to know the wickedness of your course. If you are really in want," he continued, seeing her frightened look, "there is the alms-house, which the public has gener-

ously provided for all such characters. And now, go," he said, still more sternly, "unless you wish to be sent there!"

As the poor, terrified child stole quickly away, without daring to look behind her, he turned to the deacon, saying:

"I never encourage street beggars. It only confirms them in idleness and vice. It is deplorable to see how this evil increases with us. Next time the city council meet, I shall bring the subject before them, for it is becoming a perfect nuisance. But we shall have the pleasure of seeing you and your family at my wife's party to-night, when we can speak further of these matters."

And, with a polite rejoinder from the deacon, the gentlemen parted.

Mr. G—— found a great many things in this world "truly deplorable." He was a well-meaning man, but ignorant, narrow-minded, and conceited. Consequently he often fell into the mistake of looking more to the *shams* of things than the *reality*, and this *was* indeed "truly deplorable."

Little Bessie hurried a few rods up the street, then, overcome by disappointment, hunger, cold and fatigue, she sank against a brick wall; and, drawing her scanty mantle about her, to conceal her face, wept bitterly. It was about the city dinner hour, and that cross street was comparatively deserted. The few young clerks that hurried along were far too intent on the thought of their dinner, or the afternoon holiday, to trouble themselves about the forlorn-looking object that crouched against the wall; besides, ragged, miserable-looking children were no novelty to them.

Presently a number of Irish laborers came tramping up the street, the rosy hue of their broad cheeks deepened almost to purple by the intense cold. As they hurried along, one of them almost stumbled over the child, who seemed to have lost both sight and hearing in the bitterness of her disappointment.

"Faith, me darlint!" said the man, catching her by the

arm, "and it's a pretty time ye have taken to be sunnin' ye'self here like a toad, when the cowl'd is so great that the blessed sun himself can't shine, but is creeping behind yon big blanket of a cloud; and the wind is piping through the streets like a thousand Connaught fiddlers, every tooth in a boy's head dancing a devil's hornpipe to the same. There, hinney, trot along wid ye."

Seeing that the child made no attempt to move, but again leaned heavily against the wall, he drew aside her hood, and, catching a glimpse of her pale, tear-dimmed face, he yelled after his companions:

"Hello, boys! Bide a bit. The child is kilt with cowl'd or hunger. Cheer up," he continued, seeing her frightened look, "the boys are all friends. Spake, if you can, and tell us what is it that's ailing ye."

Mikey Corcoran's rich brogue was almost incomprehensible to poor Bessie, but the genuine kindness of the tone was not to be mistaken; and, taking courage from that and the kind faces gathered around her, she strove to keep back her tears while she told her simple story.

"The marciess villain! May the curse of St. Patrick light on him!" exclaimed Mike.

"Warm as he is in his grand biggin yonder, he will find it hotter in purgatory, I'm thinking!" cried another.

"And it's the tay, and sugar, and bread, ye shall have for the ould one, and a warm bit for ye'self, if ye will just step round the corner wid us to Pat Reilly's; though it's little we have to give, and the mouths at home are gaping like young swallows at Whitsuntide."

"That ye shall; and, Terence, my boy, may the blessed Virgin send you a thousand happy new-years, just for that same thought!" exclaimed Mikey, catching the child up in his brawny arms, and leading the way to the little dwelling of Pat Reilly.

PART III.

An hour later, little Bessie had left the city behind her, and was crossing the wide, bleak plain that stretches between H—— and M——. She was so much occupied by the events of the day, that she did not see that the sun was quite hidden by the "big blanket of a cloud," as her Irish friend termed it, nor that the atmosphere was heavy with particles of snow. But when the great flakes began to fall, she quickened her pace, for she knew that her grandmother would be anxious for her safety; besides, she much feared that the little parcels in her basket, the gifts of the kind-hearted Irishmen, would get wet. But she could not out-travel the storm.

Thicker and faster fell the great white flakes, now whirled in her face and eyes by the wild wind that swept over the plain, now sinking to the earth as quietly as the dews of summer. For some time the child beguiled the weariness of the way by noting the increasing depth of the snow by her own footprints; but she soon grew weary of this, and began to look — O, how earnestly! — for some traveller to overtake her, and give her a ride.

Soon her hands and feet began to grow stiff and numb, and she could hardly make her way through the heavy snow. O, how glad she was, when she saw the guide-board that pointed to N——! for then she knew she was but two miles distant from home. She paused, and, dashing the snow from her long eyelashes, looked round. It was almost dark, but she knew that from that point there was a foot-path, leading through the woods, that would shorten the distance a good half mile. It was an unwise step; but she soon made her way through the drifts over the fence, and began to lay her course by the well-known shrubs and bushes, for, by that time the snow lay, even in the shallowest places, several inches deep. She soon found that, in the deepening twilight, and blinded by the snow, it was no easy matter to distinguish one

clump of leafless shrubs from another. Still she struggled on, unconscious, for a time, that every step took her further from home than before.

Finally she was brought to a stand by a ledge of rocks that rose perpendicularly before her to the height of many feet. Then she knew that she was lost; but hunger, cold and exhaustion, had so far done their work, that she felt neither fear nor anxiety. Numbness and stupefaction had seized on all her faculties; she only felt weary, and, O, so sleepy! Still she had a kind of indistinct consciousness that she should die there all alone in the woods; therefore she knelt down at the foot of an old sycamore, that grew close by the ledge, and offered her nightly petition to our Father. This done, she yielded to the drowsiness that oppressed her, and laid herself down in a sheltered nook beneath a shelving rock.

As she laid her head on the cold, frozen earth, she thought of the little birds that sat in the catnip under the window, the morning before. "God cares for them — he will not forget me," she drowsily murmured, while a faint smile broke round her blue, stiffening lips. Some time elapsed, during which there was no more suffering for little Bessie. She dreamed of lying on the soft, green turf, among the sweet wild flowers, violets, anemones, and the golden adder's tongue, which she loved so well, while above her hovered those sweet angel faces so often seen in her dreams.

Presently there was a sound, as of something wallowing through the snow — a quick, eager snuffling of the air — a few short, wild barks, and then, with a perfect yell of delight, old Jack came bounding through the snow to her side.

How like human reason seemed the instinct of the noble animal! How tenderly he took her garments in his teeth, and shook from them the snow, and licked her hands — ay, and her face, too — with his warm, smooth tongue! How extravagant his joy, when his efforts to arouse her were crowned with success!

"Dear old Jack!" murmured the child, as his piteous whining reached her ears; "I have no dinner for you; indeed, I have been very hungry myself."

At length she sat up and looked about her. The snow had ceased to fall, but the scene looked so strange, beneath the faint light of the wan, ghostly-looking moon, that, for some moments, Bessie could hardly comprehend her situation. But gradually she recalled the events of the day, and with them came the thoughts of her grandmother's anxiety and terror.

"Jack," she said, passing her arm around his shaggy neck, "do you think we can find the way home?"

He looked up in her face a moment, with an expression of almost human intelligence in his dark eyes, then turned, as if ready to go. She rose to follow him, but found that she could hardly move her benumbed limbs. The faithful creature led the way, often looking back, as if to encourage her, until, finally, his unerring sagacity led them to her grandmother's door.

Years have passed, and Bessie Lyman is now the petted plaything and acknowledged heiress of Capt. James Lyman, who, after many years of absence, returned in time to soothe the last days of his mother, and take charge of her little Bessie. One of the first cares of the warm-hearted sailor was to seek out Mikey Coreoran and his companions, and reward them four-fold for their kindness to his niece.

As to Jack, his irascible master, touched by little Bessie's gratitude and fondness for the dog, made her a present of him; for which good deed he also had his reward.

The noble old fellow is dead, but his memory is faithfully cherished, and, over the fireplace in Captain Lyman's neat parlor, hangs a large painting, which even Edwin Landseer might not disdain, and which Bessie delights to point out to her friends as the portrait of old Jack.

SKETCHES OF OUR VILLAGE.

I.

THE STRIFE.

To follow the custom of certain wise and learned historians, reader, we ought to begin at the beginning (we had well-nigh put that in French, but, after all, old English is the best), and speak of the geographical position of our village, define its boundaries and area, describe its geological formations, its rivers, lakes and mountains (for it has at least what we dignify by these names), the number of its inhabitants, etc.; but we dislike details, and, besides, are not very wise ourselves, having never been able to comprehend why the sun, which always rises in the east, as seen from our home, should, from the other side of Tetoket, seem to rise in a directly opposite direction.

Moreover, the country round about us is so broken, the roads so full of crooks and turns, that, unless you have a Macgregor's aversion to plains, you will not care to seek us out. Passing by, therefore, these particulars, we will proceed to speak of the wars, foreign and civil, that have at various times caused dire commotion within our precincts; for, in this respect, our experience somewhat resembles that of Hector Homespun, the renowned tailor, in Cooper's tale of the "Red Rover."

We begin with the Pequod war, when those redoubted captains, Mason of Connecticut and Stoughton of Massachusetts, pursued the royal Sassacus and his routed tribe along our

borders, halting at the adjoining settlement of Menunkatuck, to behead two captive sachems, who nobly refused to betray their chief. The name of the spot still bears witness to the deed. It is now the site of a fashionable watering-place, but we never pace the broad piazzas of the "Sachem Head House" without recalling this scene, and it requires little aid from fancy to picture forth the spot as it was at that time — the rocky point, covered with the primeval growth of the forest; the white-crested waves of the Sound, sweeping toward the beach like a train of white-cowled friars, chanting in low, monotonous murmurs solemn masses for the souls of the waiting victims; the handful of soldiers, resting on their arms — worn, weary, emaciated, by their harassing march through the wilderness; gazing with stern countenances, not untouched by admiration, on those stately stoics of the woods, as they calmly and somewhat contemptuously await the order which shall send them to the happy hunting-ground; while in the foreground stood the English captains — grim, gaunt and undismayed — the very personification of puritan courage.

We shall not stay to describe the stout resistance which our village made to the union of the New Haven colony with that of Connecticut, seeing that it is duly set forth in that famous remonstrance called the "New Haven Case Stated," nor dwell on the zeal with which our fathers sped the regicides on their way towards that settlement, while the king's commissioners sat sipping their "flip" with the good old Governor Leete at Menunkatuck — for before us lie the days of "Seventy-six."

Ah, reader! could you just sit down by our ingle-side, we would have a long chat about those perilous times, and we would get the ancients of our village to tell us of the spirit with which their fathers and brothers responded to Washington's requisition for more troops; of Governor Tryon's piratical expedition to New Haven; of the bustle and confusion in our quiet farm-houses, as the echo of his cannon leaped from hill to hill; and of the stern faces and resolute tones of the

matrons, as they packed their valuables, and gave their orders to their superannuated slaves, or boys too young for the camp, preparatory to seeking safety for themselves and their little ones amid the thick forests of Tetoket. Then, if you are not one of those who deem the Chinese plant a nuisance, you should sip your evening beverage from one of those tiny china cups which date far back in the colony time; and if it chance to be a summer evening, we should place the round tea-table (a part of the wedding portion of one of those same matrons) under the great hickory in front of the house — a meet spot to “remember the days of old;” for, rough and massive as it looks now, seventy-five years ago its smooth, lithe stem served as a target for certain relatives of ours, when with their young comrades they exchanged, for a few, brief days, the hard service of the camp for the joys of home. Some rods to the east, where the smooth green knoll slopes down to the spring brook, stood the old farm-house. Nothing remains to mark its site, save a slight hollow in the green turf; and those brave-hearted boys sleep where they fell, with scores of their comrades, on the field of White Plains. Another generation has passed away, but the old hickory, with the bullets still in its heart, lives on, rejoicing in the sunlight and dew, blessing us with its shade in summer, and rattling down its burden of nuts every autumn to gladden the hearts of the children.

But we forget that we have taken upon ourselves the office of veritable historian; therefore, leaving this household shade, we shall note but slightly here the great domestic feud that divided the village *a la Montague et Capulet*, somewhere about the year 1732, as to the proper method of “pitching the tunes in meeting;” it being sufficient to say that, in the great society meeting called upon that occasion, it was then and there voted, by a large majority, to the great dismay of certain musical critics, that henceforth the clerk be permitted to pitch the tune after which method he pleased. Neither

shall we enter into the details of the bitter ecclesiastical schisms, during which several influential families seceded from the established Congregational order, and took upon themselves the forms of the Episcopal church, being duly denounced by their former brethren as those whom Satan doth desire to sift as wheat. Though the prejudice awakened at that time still continues, in some degree, to tinge the fair current of life, we shall not stay to trace its effects at present — for our interest lies chiefly in the grand pitched battle which occurred in the centre school-district about the beginning of the present century.

The old school-house, the first erected in the district, in which the village fathers had learned their catechism and conned over Dilworth's spelling-book, had become a reproach, even to consciences usually dormant to everything like comfort or convenience in school-houses; and, after years of deliberation and much canvassing, they determined to erect a new building — one which should reflect honor on themselves and the whole town.

We must depart from our original intention so far as to say that the site of our village is a small, basin-shaped valley, scooped out from amid the hills, through the middle of which a small but beautiful stream goes loitering like a truant child. This stream (we call it river) separates the village common from the ancient grave-yard, where sleep the first settlers, and, crossing the main road, almost encircles what still continues to be called the *new* grave-yard, though here and there a sunken grave, with its rudely-sculptured slab of red freestone, proves that many years have elapsed since the first lone dweller was laid there. A few feet to the west of the old grave-yard stood, at the time of which we speak, the old meeting-house, constructed after the most rigid puritanic notions of architecture, without steeple or bell, and with a multitude of small square windows, which gave it more the appearance of a great warehouse than anything else. Beyond

this, the open common stretches westward several rods, and here the district decided to erect their new house. Nothing like the little, low, brown house in which they had tasted the benefit of birch and Daboll, would content them now; nothing short of a two-story, two-chimneyed building, with a room on the ground floor for the common school, and the one above for an academy, to the want of which they had become suddenly conscious.

It was certainly a grand affair, superior to anything in the adjacent villages; and who shall blame them if they *did* feel certain pleasant titillations in the region of approbateness, as they gazed upon the belfry, surmounted by its glittering vane—that belfry from which, alas! no bell was ever destined to sound?

As it was impossible to complete the building before the period arrived for the commencement of the winter school, it was decided to finish the lower room, and leave the rest until the spring vacation. This was done, and a teacher engaged, whose chief recommendation seemed to consist in the fact that he had taught several terms, was very impartial, and a rigid disciplinarian. In temper he was hasty and dogmatic, and, like too many of his class, seemed to be utterly deficient in that wisdom which seeks to win the *heart* of childhood, rather than *compel* the intellect. Ferule in hand, he drove the children into the house and out, he drove them through their lessons and recitations, and thus he had driven through several winters, until he received his wages—by far the most important part of the contract with him, for what could he have earned on the farm during the short days of winter? His impartiality was manifested by punishing, on every possible occasion, the children of those who were officially connected with the school; thereby, as he thought, showing his independence. It was not long before his severity began to give rise to complaints, which were duly resented by the party in favor of rigid discipline; and thus began the great storm

which swept over the village, like the sirocco, blinding the eyes and stifling the consciences, causing many families that had hitherto sailed the sea of life together to part company, and send after each other bitter words and scowls of defiance, instead of good wishes and friendly cheer.

Ithiel Chittenden, or, to give his military title and name as commonly abbreviated by his neighbors, Lieutenant Chinnin, had been one of the most active in engaging the teacher; but as long as the punishment fell only on his eldest child, Molly, a beautiful, high-spirited girl of thirteen, whatever he might have thought, he held his peace, only replying to her indignant complaints, and hearty wishes that the teacher might slip from the old crossing-pole into the river, and get half drowned, or fall down on the ice — anything to oblige him to leave the school — with a “Tut, tut, Molly; I dare say you are as noisy and mischievous as a flock of king-birds.”

But when Mr. Evarts laid his heavy hand upon his pets, his little twin boys, Joseph and Benjamin — when, week after week, they came home and held up to him their little, fat hands, swollen and purple from the hard strokes of the ferule, his spirit was moved within him. He sought an interview with the teacher, and remonstrated earnestly with him on the wrong of his undue severity. The teacher indignantly and somewhat insultingly resented what he termed his interference, and manifested his resentment and independence by punishing still more severely every little fault of his children.

Notwithstanding his warlike title, the lieutenant was a peaceably-disposed man; it took a good deal to rouse and excite his combativeness; but this object once fairly attained, he manifested something like the obstinate tenacity of the bull-dog. The circumstance of the interview between him and the teacher became known, and their words duly reported and distorted to suit the views of the contending parties. He explained, corrected and remonstrated, until, out of all patience, he vowed (the lieutenant never swore) by the great

John Rogers, that the teacher should quit the village, or his children the school.

The party in favor of rigid discipline held up their hands in holy horror at this manifestation of weakness. They shook their heads ominously when they spoke of little Joe and Benje, and talked dolorously of the many instances in which children, born to their parents late in life, had been ruined themselves and brought ruin on their families, all for the want of a little wholesome discipline. One or two even went so far as to question whether they were justified in permitting him to retain his commission, as his conduct might tend to produce a laxity of discipline in the militia, thereby endangering the character of that national bulwark.

The aggrieved party, on the other hand, looked upon him as little less a martyr than the worthy lecturer on divinity whose name he had invoked, and they began to look upon the little twin boys with something like the same interest with which they had been taught to view the nine small children of that worthy man, as represented in a wood-cut that invariably graced the pages of the New England Primer.

Those who are unacquainted with that phase of social life manifested in country villages, can have no conception of the bitterness and length to which petty quarrels can be carried. Not that the people are worse, but their facilities are better. There are few topics of foreign interest among them, few incidents occur to break the ordinary routine of life, and they are consequently much occupied with local affairs. Besides, there is a certain class, which is never lacking in any society, the members of which are far better versed in the origin, faults, foibles, weaknesses, errors and *faux pas* of every individual, than they are with their own; and these, set on by one or two adroit wire-pullers, would breed a quarrel in Paradise.

Moreover, the matter is still worse where the families are all connected by marriage or blood, as is the case with us,

and where they still retain, to a degree perhaps beyond any other place in New England, the old English aristocracy of family, the first question with many of our older people being, to this day, whenever a stranger is spoken of, "What is his family — what is his breed?"

This, perhaps, is owing to the circumstance that eight out of ten of the fine farms in our township are owned and cultivated by the lineal descendants of their original owners, and the traveller who chances to loiter away an half hour or so, while waiting for his dinner at the village inn, among the mossy stones in the old grave-yard, may hear most of the names so rudely carved there a century ago, shouted forth again and again, by the noisy schoolboys on the adjacent common.

Be this as it may, our village was soon in a great uproar. The teacher, the original cause of contention, soon served only as a central figure in the dark picture, around which became drawn, in no neutral tints, all the poor human frailties of which each of the combatants had been guilty, and some, doubtless, of which they never had thought. And so did it gloom the social atmosphere, that all grew dark and stifling, until men could no longer see to discern the fair features of truth and charity, and, what was still worse, even women and young children felt its baleful influence.

There were not wanting some calm souls to preach forbearance and peace, but their voices were scarcely heard above the din; and even the strongest influence then known in a country village, reverence for the minister, was powerless in this case. The old man who held the pastoral office at this time, possessed a keen insight into human nature; he went from house to house, reasoning, exhorting and ridiculing; neither did he fail to belabor them "with apostolic blows and thumps" from the pulpit; but, alas! he lived in the eighteenth century, and could not cast out devils.

The disciplinarians having the majority, and being determined to retain Mr. Evarts in the school, the aggrieved party seceded, and, leaving the new house, sacrificing all the dollars, cents and mills which they had contributed towards it, with many self-complacent reflections on the similarity of their condition with that of ancient Lot, on a like occasion, went westward some rods, and erected a small, low building by the way-side, which they painted a bright red, perhaps to make the contrast between it and the white one they had left as wide as possible. Their opponents christened it the Revenge, and had not the name been given before it became known that they had engaged for teacher an out-and-out Episcopalian, one who kept Christmas, and actually did n't cook for Thanksgiving, nor go to meeting on that occasion, they might have called it by a more sinister name.

If this unhappy quarrel embittered the tempers and hearts of friends and neighbors, its evil effects fell not less heavily upon their children. Some of them took so completely the tone of their parents, that they would not speak to their former playmates; and others, who neither knew nor cared aught about the quarrel, were forbidden to do so by their parents. None felt this estrangement more keenly than little Molly Chinnin, and Mark, the son of her father's neighbor, and, until this miserable contention, most intimate friend, Ensign Ross. An unbroken friendship had subsisted for many years between the families of these men. Their homes were separated only by a green meadow and bit of pasture, and from infancy they had shared their plays and lessons together. Together they had learned to skate and swim; together they had conquered vulgar fractions, and received due punishment on that same day for singeing the teacher's long queue in commemoration of that event; together they had received their commissions in the militia;—and let me tell you, reader, that a commission in that body, which at the present day resembles Falstaff's ragged regiment, was at that time con-

sidered an honor not unmeet for the highest dignitaries in the land. Together they had wooed, wedded and settled down on the old homesteads, rejoiced over the birth of their children, watched their growing fondness for each other; and, as Mark grew up tall and straight as a young pine, and Molly like a graceful, beautiful green willow, there was nothing said; but as they watched them coming home from school, full of mirth and mischief, or seated over the brawling river, on the old elm-shaded pole, conning their lesson from the same wofully dog's-eared book, or disputing about the exact number of words on a certain page, the thoughts of both sometimes reverted to a beautiful knoll, midway between their dwellings, which had often been pointed out as a fine building site, with a kind of wonder as to whether it would ever be used for that purpose.

Ensign Ross had no child save Mark; and, having the fate of several only children before his eyes, he early determined that his boy should not be spoiled by being "*babied*." Therefore, he never took his part in any of his childish squabbles, and Mark early learned that if he got into trouble there was no use in complaining at home, for his mother was a woman of too much sense to pet and pity him in secret.

Though he heartily detested Mr. Evarts, — and the feeling, to judge from the blows and thumps bestowed upon him, was duly returned, — yet his father knew nothing of the matter; or, if his wife sometimes mentioned that Mark had been punished, he usually replied with, "Ay, ay, and he deserved it richly, I dare say!"

Of course he was little inclined to sympathize with the peculiar indulgence which his old friend manifested toward his late-born twins.

"Considerin' that Molly is an only daughter, and was for a long time an only child," was his frequent remark to his wife, "I allow that they did pretty well by her. But it puts me out of all manner of patience, to see such a man as Ithiel

Chinnin led by the nose by two such imps. Why, it makes no difference who he is talking to; if it were Thomas Jefferson, and one of those precious boys were to break in with a string of questions as long as the moral law, he would stop and answer them all. He not only makes a goose of himself, but spoils the boys, and I must tell him so."

He did tell him, or at least tried to; but somehow, in this case, his hints failed of their usual effect. The truth was, the lieutenant was dimly conscious of the least possible tendency towards weakness where his boys were concerned; he did not like to admit it, even to himself, and the frequent hints of his neighbor touched upon a sore spot.

Ensign Ross was by no means hard or unfeeling. He was naturally genial and jovial, but he had contrived to get certain *fixed* ideas into his head, especially upon the management of children, beyond which he never troubled himself to look. "Spare the rod, and spoil the child," was scripture with him, and he wanted nothing better. He was naturally impatient, and could not brook interruption, especially from children; therefore, he often censured as weakness that which was simply good nature in his slower and more patient neighbor. When the teacher punished the little boys so severely, he stoutly defended him, without inquiring into their offence or listening to their father's explanation, and read the lieutenant such a lecture on his folly and weakness in all that concerned his boys, that the latter was deeply grieved and astonished. Indeed, upon reflection, he felt, himself, that he had said many things that were unwarranted, even by their long friendship; but he did not like to confess it, and contented himself with reasoning after this manner:

"If he has a mind to be mad at a hasty but well-meant word, why, let him."

Chinnin, on his part, thought more deliberately. "If Jonathan Ross thinks I have turned into a natural fool, why, let him seek those that are wiser."

Thus arose a frosty atmosphere between them, chilling alike the ripened fruit of the past, and the opening hopes of the future. Had they been left to themselves, doubtless the memory of the past and a sense of their present folly would have brought back the summer to their hearts; but a rumor of their feelings got abroad, as such things always do in a country village, and the powers of scandal and schism took the matter up, going from one to the other, watching every word and look, distorting, exaggerating and misrepresenting, until, after a few weeks, they could no longer discern, in the pictures held up to them by these meddlers, any trace of the old, friendly features. Still there were some grains of truth in all these reports; for they were by no means happy, and their state of heart and mind was one which is prone to think and say bitter things.

From the day that Leftenant Chinnin withdrew his children from school, they ceased to speak together, for the epithets, "Dotard" and "Busybody," which had been angrily applied to each other on that occasion, seemed to stick in their throats, and prevent anything like a friendly utterance.

All through the remainder of the winter the snow lay white and unbroken on the fields between the two dwellings; no path, trodden hard and smooth as ice, marked the constant intercourse of the families; no small foot-prints, deviating from the path at every few yards, gave evidence of the presence and exploring propensities of Mark and Molly. Although not absolutely forbidden to speak with each other, they seldom met now,—never, indeed, save when Mark contrived to come round that way from school, and exchange a few words with her through the palings of the front fence, during which intercourse he never failed to express a very hearty wish that Mr. Evarts had been in Jericho before he ever saw our village.

Thus the strife raged through the winter months, until the raw winds and heavy thaws of March came, bringing with

them a scourge which many in their secret consciences felt to be a judgment for their sins, — the scarlet fever, or, as it was then called, the black canker. Something was necessary to bring them back to a sense of dependence and human brotherhood. Instead of a blessing, they had made their children a subject of contention, and God in his wisdom took many of them home to himself. The rebuke was felt. Those who had passed each other with stiff necks and averted faces, again clasped hands over the graves of their little ones, and before God's altar, in silence and tears.

For a time the disease seemed inevitably fatal; fear and grief sat upon every countenance; the school was closed, and parents took every precaution to guard their children from the fatal contagion. Thus it happened that Mark Ross was, for several weeks, shut off from all communication with his young associates. He chafed like a young lion in his confinement, more especially when he heard that the fever had seized upon the lieutenant's little boys, and it was thought that they must die. They had been great favorites with Mark, and if they were spoiled, as his father said, he knew that Molly and himself were, in a measure, answerable for it, for they had always taken their part, and sturdily defended them, right or wrong. He longed to go over and see them, but he knew that neither of his parents would consent to this. And, if the truth were known, not the less did his kind-hearted mother and impulsive father long to go over and speak words of sympathy and comfort to their stricken neighbors. But submission to his will on her part, and a sense of shame and wrong done and received on his, kept them both silent. But when the news came that Molly, too, was stricken down, Mark's course was taken.

"If father has a mind to be a heathen, and worse than a heathen," he muttered, one morning as he watched the ensign on his way to the woods, "why, well and good; but mother is a Christian, I take it. She ought to know better. I will

give her her choice; either she or I go over to-day and see how Molly and the boys are."

He watched his mother with a compressed lip as she went about her household labor; then, when she had smoothed her hair and drawn her wheel to her accustomed corner, he began:

"Mother, Lydia and Tim Linsley, Thankful Harrison, Sam and David Butler, Abby Barker, and ever so many more children, have died. Do you think that Joe and Benje and Molly will all die, too?"

"I don't know, Mark. Sarah Whedon says that Doctor Foot gives no hope for the little boys. Poor Hannah Chinnin! it will be a sad blow to her to lose them."

"Mother, do you remember what nice custards and jellies Mrs. Chinnin used to bring me, when I had the measles; and how she watched by me and nursed me when you was too much worn out to hold up your head?"

"Yes, Mark, I shall never forget her kindness!" and the tears sprang to the mother's eyes.

"Well, then, mother," he exclaimed, rising and giving the forestick a kick, as if to settle his decision, "I think it is a burning shame that we should let them all die, and never go near them. I, for one, am going over there to-day. I am but a boy, I know, and can do nothing to help them, but the children will know that I have not forgotten them. As to the fever, if I catch it, I must. One had as good die with the fever, as live in a quarrel all his days."

Mark had not miscalculated the effect of his words upon his mother. She knew something of his determined spirit, and exclaimed, hurriedly:

"No, no, Mark! For you to go there would be tempting Providence outright. If you should catch the fever, I should never forgive myself. I will go. I *will*," she continued, seeing him begin to button up his jacket. "I have wanted to go for a long time, for these quarrels, as you say, are dreadful.

Only promise me that you will not attempt to see them yourself, and I will go this minute."

"I promise for to-day," replied Mark.

There was no manifestation of surprise when Esther Ross entered that house of affliction — nothing that marked a memory of the bitter estrangement between them; but a warm pressure of the hand and a grateful look from the over-wearied mother, as, unable to bear any longer the last fearful struggle between life and death, she relinquished her child into the hands of her old friend, and buried her face on her husband's shoulder. As in birth, so in death, those children were not divided. Death gathered them both in the space of a few hours, and kind Esther Ross (ah, how she inwardly blessed the wilfulness of her boy, that had driven her forth!) smoothed their fair locks with a gentle hand, and prepared their little forms for the grave. Then she sought the room of Molly, where her presence and thoughtful care were like dew to the heart of the fear-stricken girl.

When she returned home that night, and related with a mother's eloquence the sore affliction of their neighbors, Mark wept outright, and the eyes of the ensign glistened as he said:

"I am glad you went, Esther!" Then, laying his hand upon Mark's head, he added, "Remember, my boy, that little Joe and Benje are free from anger, and sin, and sorrow, now."

Esther Ross knew that her husband passed an anxious and restless night, but she knew, also, that he was one of those who are best left to the workings of their own convictions; therefore, she did not ask him, in so many words, to attend the funeral, and bury all anger in that double grave. Mark, to her surprise, did not ask to go, and, with a sad and somewhat anxious heart, she went over at an early hour to give such assistance as might be needed.

The grave-yard and the road which led to it were in full

view from the windows of Ensign Ross' house. The ensign had loitered about the wood-pile and yard all the morning, in a restless, undecided manner. When the people began to gather to the house of mourning, he went into his house, and paced the floor with the same restless step, occasionally joining Mark, who had stationed himself at the window.

Mark covered his eyes with his hands when he saw the old pastor issue forth from the house, followed by four boys not much larger than himself, bearing the double coffin; for he could not bear to think that the fair-haired boys lay beneath that heavy black pall.

But his father continued to watch the procession with a troubled expression of face. Onward it crept with that slow and solemn pace, and there came a convulsive twitching about his mouth, as it filed into the grave-yard, and past a little, short mound, headed by a slab of white marble, a few yards to the right of the gate; for he thought of the sad November day when he and his wife had stood by that open grave, and well did he remember whose hand had gently lowered the head of his little flaxen-haired Mabel to her last home; and who, in all times of trial and affliction, had stood by his side like a brother. He seized his hat, and, hurrying onward, soon reached the spot, and gently made his way through the crowd to the side of the grave.

When the solemn prayer of the old minister was ended, with a gesture of entreaty he took a shovel from the hand of a young man, and slowly and reverently sprinkled the first grains of dust on the coffin below. As he returned the shovel to the hand of the young man, his eye for one second met that of the bereaved father, and he felt that his motive was understood. His hand laid the last clod upon that grave; his foot was the last to turn away and join Esther, who still lingered by the white tombstone of their own child.

They pursued their way home in silence, and, when they reached that house of sorrow, as if by one impulse, they both

turned and entered. As they entered the vacant sitting-room, they heard the voice of the lieutenant raised in broken expostulations in an adjoining room.

"No, no, my boy; this must not be. We have suffered sorely; and if you, too, should take the fever and die" —

The lieutenant could not proceed; and, as they drew near the open door, they saw their own son, Mark, standing by the bedside of Molly, holding her fevered hand closely in his, as he replied, with a quivering lip:

"They have buried up little Joe and Benje, and would not let me see them, but I *will* see Molly; I've seen her to-day, and I'll see her to-morrow. I don't care for fever; my father looks cross, and mother sad, and nothing is as it used to be. This quarrel has made us all miserable enough."

"Ithiel! Ithiel! the boy is right!" exclaimed Ensign Ross, stepping through the door-way and offering his hand to his startled neighbor. "I have been harsh, unkind, unchristian — forgive me!"

The stricken father stared for a second in astonishment, then, seizing the proffered hand, murmured, as he bowed his head over it to conceal his tears:

"And I, too, Jonathan — I, too, am guilty. But I have left it all there," he added, with a significant gesture towards the grave-yard. "Let it be forgotten."

And so it was. After a long and weary illness, Molly recovered; and the lives of the families again flowed on in the same current until, as white-headed old men, Lieutenant Chinnin and Ensign Ross were laid with their fathers.

But, years before they died, the white house upon the hill, which they had seen in their dreams, had become a reality, and two little boys had been born there, who, at the special request of the ensign, were christened Joseph and Benjamin.

The storm of contention gradually subsided, and the old landmarks became visible. The land has now had rest for many years, and the traces of the old battle are scarcely dis-

cernible to any save such curious beings as ourselves. The white school-house, *minus* the belfry, still stands; but the "Revenge," where we conned our earliest lessons, has long since gone to destruction.

II.

OUR SCHOOL-MISTRESS.

Not long since, while on a visit to some kind friends of mine, I found myself in the company of several ladies, who were discussing with much interest the subject of education, and the respective merits of several fashionable seminaries in that vicinity. Not feeling particularly interested in the subject, I joined my friend E——, in looking over Darley's graphic illustrations of Rip Van Winkle, and soon became so deeply absorbed that I heard only the murmur of their voices, occasionally broken by a word or two uttered in a shriller key, seeming like the echo of the voice of Rip's good vrowe.

I was suddenly recalled from this enchanted valley, by the voice of the fashionable Mrs. W——, exclaiming :

“ Ah, yes ! we will ask Miss R——.” Then laying her jewelled hand on my shoulder, as if not quite sure that I was free from that drowsy atmosphere, she continued :

“ You have hardly heard our argument, my dear, but we were speaking of the superior advantages which seminaries in the city possess over those in the country in all that relates to the true finish of a young lady's education. May we ask at what seminary you were educated ? ”

There was something so *bizarre*, so ludicrous, between the lady's expectant tone and the picture her words called up to my mind, that I could hardly repress a smile as the unvarnished truth rose to my lips ; but one glance at her haughty face brought with it the memory of her wealth, her morbid

exclusiveness, her horror of anything "native to the soil," and, let me confess the truth, reader, with a feeling strongly akin to cowardice, I evaded a direct reply by saying, "I was educated at home."

"Ah! you had a governess, then. Your parents were so wise as to follow the good old English custom. I wish it were more fashionable here, for it is much to be preferred to our mixed boarding-schools. I have sometimes thought I would employ a governess for Celestia; but it is so difficult to find one possessing all the requisite qualifications. Your friends must have been fortunate."

My folly had brought its reward. I colored, grew confused, embarrassed, and was trying to stammer forth something, when I caught the clear gray eyes of my friend E—— fixed earnestly upon me, while a most provokingly quizzical smile gathered around his mouth. All at once my confusion vanished, and, raising my eyes to the lady's face, I said, quietly:

"I fear I have led you into a mistake, Mrs. W——. I should have said, that I was educated chiefly at the district school in my native village."

There was a slight, almost imperceptible raising of the lady's shoulders, and her bland air of respectful attention vanished at once, as she replied, with a slight drawl:

"Ah — ahem! I think I have heard Squire W—— say that there have been some improvements in the common schools within a few years;" and, turning carelessly away, she began to discuss with her neighbor the last new design for *crotchets* that had appeared in the *Lady's Book*.

"Coolly done, that," whispered E——. "You must remember that a great gulf suddenly yawns between people, sometimes, even in this world. For a moment, I feared you would fail to see that little red school-house, of which you so often speak, in the golden atmosphere that surrounds Mrs. W——."

As other people besides Mrs. W—— sometimes ask after

my Alma Mater, I have determined to describe it; partly because I think "our school" was peculiar even in those days, and partly because I wish to *daguerre* a few traits of one who has long been among the angels.

Should you ever chance to visit our village, reader, you will find the main road from the west, for the space of two miles or so, clinging close to the foot of a rugged chain of hills, known as the Tetoket range. On the left, you will have their precipitous front, in some places barren and bleak, and crowned by huge old cliffs:

"Here, dark with the thick moss of centuries,
And there of chalky whiteness, where the thunderbolt
Has splintered them;"

and in others draped to the very summit with a mass of tangled green, through which rise the heads of the tall cedars, like watchful sentinels. Very, very beautiful is the old mountain in the genial spring-time, when he unfurls his leafy banners and displays every shade of green, from the deep black hue of the cedar, to the pale, faint tinge of the buttonwood and the aspen, with the white blossoms of the dog-wood peeping out from the midst like stars. And still beautiful is he when the frosts of autumn have fallen upon him, and all the shows of summer have departed; when the everlasting cedars, clothed to the very topmost branch in robes of flame-colored livery, stand, like old martyrs, lifting their upstretched arms to heaven, and hinting, not dimly, that God still speaketh from the midst of the burning bush, would we but listen.

On the right, the open country sweeps southward toward Long Island Sound, but so broken and undulating that you must ascend the mountain, would you catch a glimpse of the blue water. As you approach the village, a valley opens, in the midst of which sleep two small but beautiful sheets of water, separated only by a narrow, ribbon-like bit of green meadow. Winding around these, you may trace green lanes,

crossed here and there by more public roads, and catch glimpses of the sharp roofs and heavy stone chimneys of old farm-houses, rising from amidst clusters of green trees.

Not a great many rods beyond this point the mountain suddenly makes a turn to the north-west, and, like the face of a stern fellow-traveller relaxing into a smile at parting, smooths its rugged features, and, with a gentle, loving arm, embraces our village and the valley north of it, known among the early settlers as the "pleasant land of Goshen." Here, for the first time, you catch a view of the village, which looks like a bird's nest hidden between the hills, and, just where the last undulation of the mountain slopes down to meet the main road, stood the red school-house. I have spoken of its origin, and described its appearance in a previous sketch; but I said nothing of the old apple-tree whose boughs overhung its roof, — that apple-tree, which must, even as a germ, have had a kind of fore-feeling of its destiny, or surely its trunk would never have been garnished with such excellent knots for footholds, its limbs would never have twisted themselves into such admirable seats for children, and its blossoms would never have been the earliest and most fragrant of the season. It was truly the tree of knowledge of good and evil to us urchins; and many pleasant half-hours did we sit perched up amid its branches, watching the swallows that built their nests in the belfry of the Episcopal church across the way, or mocking the bob-o'-linkums in the meadows by the river.

Moreover, from the foot of the trunk sprang divers singularly smooth, straight shoots, which sometimes found their way into a certain corner of the school-room, as incentives to learning by the inverse method.

Then, that length of fence under the apple-tree! Never were rails so smooth or so capitally arranged for climbing. Blessings on the hand that laid them! Why, our sleds made nothing of it, but came darting like arrows from the hill above, and paused not until we landed on the opposite side of

the street. But I must not linger here ; I can almost fancy that I hear again the sound of the ferule on the window-casement, the invariable signal which recalled us from our sports.

To my young readers I would say, do not fancy that our school-room was anything like yours, with your convenient desks, your shaded windows, your globes, cabinets, and outline maps. Ours was a large, square room, lighted by six or eight windows, through which, during the long summer hours, came a flood of light and heat so intense as to dazzle the eyes and bewilder the brain of the strongest. Around three sides of the room ran rude desks, to which were attached rough, narrow planks for benches, and inside of these was a row of similar benches for the smaller scholars. These were without any support for the back, and all of them so high that not more than one pair of feet out of a dozen could by any means contrive to touch the floor. The last side, with the exception of the space taken up for the door, was occupied by the great fireplace, which yawned from the door-post to the opposite wall. In these utilitarian days, when

“ Men scarcely know how beautiful fire is,”

such fires as we used to have are a rarity. No wonder that the great wooden beam which served for a mantel-piece took fire almost every day, even though the inventor of friction-matches, on whose unfortunate head the old people of our village lay the blame of all the fires which have desolated city and country for several years, was not born.

Ah ! those great, blazing, crackling fires will never be forgotten. The heart of the sailor turns back to them, as he paces the deck through the weary night-watches, with the rain and sleet driving in his face, while the biting north wind covers his long locks and shaggy pea-jacket with glittering icicles ; and brightly do they gleam and glow in the restless dreams of more than one famished, benumbed gold-seeker, as

he sinks down to his last sleep amid the snows of the Rocky Mountains.

Of maps, we had none. I doubt whether such an article ever saw the inside of the red school-house, and the Japanese might have been next door neighbors to us, for aught we knew or cared. The labors of Lindley Murray, Horne Tooke, Webster, Ashe, Greenleaf, and Brown, were considered as entirely supererogatory by both teachers and parents. Indeed, so strong was this prejudice against grammar, that, when it was introduced into our schools, some years later, the teachers seldom made any application of its rules. We were taught to repeat it by rote, and in this way I studied grammar for several years, and could repeat the whole, from Etymology to Syntax, without being able to construe correctly a single sentence. In the same manner we studied Orthography and Prosody, as laid down in the early editions of Webster's spelling-book. I doubt whether any children were ever more familiar with that same spelling-book than were we; not only with the orthography of our lessons, but the number of words in a column, the number of leaves in the book, the leading word on each page, every typographical error; to say nothing of the hours we spent in studying the beauties of those specimens of art that illustrated the fables, counting the apples on the tree in the fable of "The Old Man and Rude Boy," or the exact number of flies composing the swarm that tormented the poor "Fox in the Bramble." In reading, spelling, and arithmetic, we were, to a certain degree, more carefully drilled, and a clear, well-written copy-book was the teacher's and pupil's pride on the day of examination.

Thus, with the occasional diversion of "choosing sides" in spelling, and a grand pitched battle with snow-balls between our boys and their rivals of the white school-house, we passed the winters. In the summers, when the large boys were busy in the fields, writing and arithmetic were both laid aside, and in their place we had patchwork with all its endless variations,

marking, embroidery, stitching, and plain-sewing. For the qualifications of our teacher in the last, I can well vouch, for I have a very distinct recollection of her compelling me to rip the wristband three times from the first shirt-sleeve I ever made, because, forsooth, I did not catch every gather.

It is of this teacher, or *mistress*,—for the term was peculiarly appropriate in those days,—I wish to speak. I have mused much upon her character, and she ever seems to have been of those unto whom it is appointed to be “made perfect through suffering.” Her whole life was a combat—a struggle with physical weakness and pain. Hour after hour have I seen her walk the school-room with rapid, uneven steps, her long, thin fingers clenched together, her pale lips parted, while the great drops of perspiration started on her brow, yet not a word of murmur ever escaped her; and, when the paroxysm was past, her voice was low and gentle as the south wind after a storm. Her tall, spare figure, and thin, pale face, bore unmistakable traces of this warfare; but there was a light in her great, dark eyes—clear, serene and luminous, as that of the fixed stars—which spake of conquest, and a hope centred in Him “in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.”

Husbandless and childless, possessing a sufficiency of this world's goods, it was a matter of surprise to many that she did not seek that life of ease which her delicate health seemed to require. But she feared the ennui and selfishness of a life of idleness; she felt intuitively that

“Something the heart must have to cherish;
Must love and joy and sorrow learn;”

that no woman can be happy without some occupation, some interest in life; therefore she took charge of the village school for many a pleasant summer.

The children became her children; in their progress, pleasures, troubles and difficulties, she rejoiced or sorrowed; and

if she could not teach the "higher branches," no one better possessed the secret of inculcating in the minds of the children habits of strict honesty, reverence toward God and our elders, kindness and forbearance toward each other, and courtesy toward all men.

She was fond of poetry, especially devotional poetry, and rhymed herself with great facility. Her approbation of our conduct was generally expressed in rhyme, on small, square pieces of paper, ornamented with various devices in red and green ink. But the highest proof of her approval, the one I prized most, was permission to take a small book, which she kept laid away choicely in her desk, containing poems for children, by Mrs. Barbauld, Jane Taylor, and others, and to go forth an hour or so, with a companion of my own choosing, and lie in the deep shadow of the thick-leaved trees, or perchance sit perched up in the old apple-tree, while we committed one or more to memory, to be recited on our return to the school-room. Another method of manifesting her approbation was to send us forth in parties of three and four, to commit to memory the inscriptions on the stones in the adjacent grave-yard. On a pleasant summer afternoon, when the sun began to sink behind the mountain, and the shadows to lengthen, the passing traveller might have seen half a dozen little girls, wandering cautiously among the sunken graves, or seated amid the tall grass at the foot of some old slab of red sandstone, tracing the lugubrious inscription with their tiny fingers.

A friend, to whom I related this peculiar trait in my early education the other day, laughingly remarked :

"And to these youthful 'Meditations among the Tombs' may be traced your present literary tastes, I suppose."

Doubtless they were not without an influence upon us, for I remember some curious thoughts and speculations passed through my head as I sat there, such as I would not have

been likely to have spoken of to any one, certainly not to any older than myself.

We always commenced our morning exercises by repeating a poem called "Daily Duty," and closed at noon with another entitled "Hosanna." I do not remember much of either; but I *do* remember how hungry I used to be before we got through with the last, which was somewhat lengthy, and how many times I have reached behind me into my dinner-basket, and extracted a piece of cake, preferring—O, Phœbus Apollo!—puritan dough-nuts to poetry. The afternoon exercises were also closed with an appropriate hymn, and, by the way, it should be borne in mind that these stanzas were repeated in as many keys as there were voices in the school. It was not often that death entered our circle, but when he did claim one of our number, or a child from any of the other districts, headed by our mistress, we followed in due procession to the grave, where we ranged ourselves around it, after the coffin had been lowered to its last resting-place, and repeated some lines appropriate to the occasion, either written by our teacher or selected from her favorite authors.

In looking over the manuscripts of our old school-mistress, not long since, I came across the following lines, which will serve to illustrate her character, as well as the occupations in which she sought to overcome her life-long foes, suffering and weakness. They were addressed to a sister, after a "distressing illness," and entitled

EXERCISE THE BEST PHYSICIAN.

"My dear, I have been spinning tow,
And I desire to have you know
How very well and strong I feel;
My best physician is my wheel.

"If you should see me at my wheel,
Perhaps you 'd think I 'd never reel;
But I can spin ten knots a day—
A noble task for me, you 'll say.

“ It strengthens all my frame, I find,
And does invigorate my mind,
And makes my spirit cheerful, too;
All the result of spinning tow.

“ I’ve put aside my easy chair,
No longer do I need to wear
My blanket and my shawl, and sit
As if I had an ague-fit.

“ Nor do I sigh and cry ‘ O, dear !
I shall be ill again, I fear ! ’
But I am cheerful now, and feel
Quite grateful to my Doctor Wheel.”

The spot where the red school-house stood is now a smooth green bank, the old apple-tree is gone, and the old rail-fence superseded by a rough, tumbling-down-looking stone wall. Time and Death have worked their will upon that merry flock of children, and she, who for so many pleasant summers moved in our midst like a guiding angel, has long since “ passed through death unto life.”

III.

A SABBATH OF 1776.

LATE in the fall of 1847, it was my good fortune to spend several delightful hours in the gallery of the "Art Union" in New York. Among the many exquisite pictures that graced its walls, was one which particularly attracted my attention. Not that I either comprehended or was much influenced by the learned and technical criticisms of the *connoisseurs* at my elbow, but it was a New England scene, "The First News of the Battle of Lexington," by Ranney, and for its truth and spirit I could well vouch.

It represented a New England landscape in the capricious month of April, with all the shows of awakening agricultural life and industry. A village smithy in the foreground, which I could have almost identified, under the projecting roof of which stood the brawny-armed smith himself, with compressed lips and knitted brows, fastening a shoe to the reeking horse of a courier (how much more significant the old Saxon word, *bode*), who, still in the saddle, hurriedly told his tale of "fate and fear" to the excited listeners that had already reached the spot. All along the road were seen hurrying stalwart forms, with the implements of toil still in their hands; in the fields, the plough and oxen were left midway in the furrow, while their master, without bridle or saddle, sprang upon the stout farm-horse, and, with his strong hand twisted in his shaggy mane, the gears still trailing at his heels, and nose high in the air, guided him, at an undreamed-of pace, across the fields and over fences, toward the scene of excitement.

I knew many in my native village that might have stood as the originals of those men; ay, and not a few horses that might, upon occasion, have taken that very look and gait. But more than this, as I gazed upon that picture, the shadowy forms of the white-haired fathers of our village seemed to take the place of the gayly-dressed people at my side, and stand leaning, as was their wont, over their stout oaken sticks, as they told over again their "tales of the times of old." One of these, which that picture vividly recalled, and which would not be an unmeet subject for the artist's pencil, I shall attempt to relate.

One Sabbath morning, during the gloomy summer of 1776, when the hopes of the patriots seemed likely to go down in darkness and blood, and even the God-sustained heart of Washington grew troubled, and almost sank within him, the people of our village came up to the house of God with sad countenances and heavy hearts. News travelled slowly then, and they were chiefly indebted to such wounded soldiers as passed through the village, on their way to their homes, for their information of the movements of the army. They knew that Washington still held New York, and the last poor wounded fellow that had reached home had told a fearful tale of the state of our own diminished army, and the hordes of troops, under the Howes, that were gathering around it like locusts.

It was a beautiful mid-summer morning. A light thunder-shower, during the latter part of the preceding night, had laid the dust and given coolness to the air. The rain-drops still hung trembling from leaf and spray, and came dropping down in showers, as the footsteps of pedestrians or the heavy tramp of horses, bearing, in most instances, the double burden of man and matron, with perchance a rosy child or two, startled from their quivering perches the silver-throated birds.

The grain was already harvested, but many fields of grass were still standing, brown and sunburnt; and it was very

evident that some of the crops suffered from lack of proper cultivation, for many of the most expert wielders of the hoe and scythe had already exchanged them for the musket and sword. Still, here and there a piece of Indian corn stood up thriftily, through the broad leaves of which the faint west wind rustled with a low, murmurous sound, like the dropping of the summer rain. In the south-west, just above the top of Teto-ket, appeared the white caps of two or three of those singular clouds, known among the country people as "thunderheads." But the people, as they pursued their way along the green lanes and over the forest-crowned hills, had other thoughts than of the beauty of the landscape. Their hearts were with their brothers and friends; their thoughts turned towards Him who is both able to build up and cast down, before whose altar they were accustomed to cast all their cares and troubles.

As with slow and reverent steps, they filed into the meeting-house, and took their seats in the square pews, it was easily seen that the greater portion of the male part of the congregation consisted of men advanced in years, and boys in their teens. The morning service passed as usual, and, after a short intermission, the people again gathered to their places, and the earnest prayer was offered, and a sermon, suited to the exigencies of the times and the wants of the audience, was commenced. Suddenly, the congregation was startled by the heavy tramp of a horse, which rapidly approached and halted by the meeting-house door. In a moment the rider had thrown himself from the saddle, and stood within the door. Handing a note to the aged deacon, who was hurrying down the aisle to ask the cause of this untoward interruption, with an audibly whispered injunction to act with speed, he as hastily mounted, and kept on his way. The deacon cast one glance at the superscription of the paper, then marched reverently up the pulpit stairs, and placed it in the hand of the minister, with the same whispered injunction. Deliberately

the old man finished his sermon and prayer, then, glancing his eye over the paper, he laid its contents before the people. It was a pressing requisition from Washington for more troops. He was daily expecting an attack from the combined forces of the enemy, and each town and village was called upon to furnish what aid it could. After a few apt and eloquent remarks on the critical situation of the beloved chieftain, the worthy man continued, "Let us not be too much cast down, my brethren. Our cause is that of truth, and justice, and righteousness; and, strong in these, we shall yet assuredly triumph. This business is urgent; and, I trust, it will not be deemed derogatory to our Christian character, nor an infringement upon the holy Sabbath, if we take such measures as seem most pressing, to-day. Therefore, all who are willing to take their lives in their hands, and stand by the side of the commander-in-chief, in this hour of trial, will, after the close of these services, please range themselves in single file upon the village common."

Then, with hands clasped, and raised towards heaven, he took up the sublime invocation of David :

"Keep not thou silence, O God! hold not thy peace, and be not still!

"For, lo, mine enemies make a tumult; they that hate thee have lifted up the head.

"They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones. They have said, Come, let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance.

"Let them be confounded and troubled forever; yea, let them be put to shame and perish.

"That men may know that thou, whose name alone is Jehovah, art Most High over all the earth!"

There was silence for the space of some moments, and then, to the strains of old "Mear," full, clear, and distinct, from all parts of the house, rose the words of the following hymn.

“ Attend, ye armies, to the fight,
And be our guardian, God,
In vain shall numerous foes unite
’Gainst thine uplifted rod.

“ Our troops, beneath thy guiding hand,
Shall gain a great renown ;
’Tis God that makes the feeble stand,
And treads the mighty down.”

The deep silence that followed the benediction was broken by the low muttering of distant thunder, for the white-capped thunder-clouds of the morning were climbing with giant strides up the western sky. Contrary to their usual custom, the people waited in silence until their pastor had descended from the pulpit and passed down the aisle; then the aged deacons moved forward, followed by the congregation in due order. As they issued from the wide doorway, the whole male portion, as if moved by one impulse, took their way to the village common. Thoughtfully and silently, to the roll-call of the booming thunder, they took their places, shoulder to shoulder, and the old minister saw before him the available strength of the village, each man capable of bearing a musket, from the gray-haired veteran to the boy of sixteen. Grouped around him was a small band, to whom age and debility had left no available weapons save faith and prayer. One other group must not be forgotten—the mothers, wives, sisters, daughters of those men upon the common, who remained clustered around the meeting-house door, watching, with breathless interest the movements of their friends. Love, pride, anxiety, hope, and faith, lit up their excited features; but I trow there was little cowardice there.

The old minister’s heart glowed within him at the sight of the resolute, determined-looking faces before him, as they proceeded to a choice of officers. The subordinate offices could readily be filled; but who should lead them to face danger and death—who should be their captain?

Who so worthy to do this as he who had stood by them in all times of trial and sorrow — he who had already aided them to fight the good fight of faith, their spiritual teacher and friend, whose moral and physical courage were undoubted? and, with one accord, they named the Rev. Samuel Eells.

The old man was much moved by this unexpected proof of their esteem and confidence. It was the highest honor in their gift, and he fully appreciated the compliment and the responsibility. He had too much of the old puritan spirit in him to decline; his heart was in the cause, and, in a few apt but broken words, he signified his willingness to stand by them in life and in death. Then, beckoning the females to advance, he bowed his head, and, like a true Cromwellian, called down the blessing of Heaven on them and their cause.

Thus was the first company raised in our village; such was the spirit with which our fathers responded to the requisition of Washington; and, in justification of the wisdom of their choice, let us add, that,

“ Like a soldier of the Lord,
With his Bible and his sword,”

the old pastor led them safely through manifold dangers, until they joined the main army in New York.

IV.

THE FIRST GRAVE.

“In vain do individuals hope for immortality, or any patent from oblivion, in preservations below the moon : there is no antidote against the opium of time, which temporarily considereth all things ; the greater part must be content to be as though they had not been — to be found in the register of God, not in the record of man.”— *Sir Thomas Brown.*

NEARLY a century and a quarter ago a pleasant group were gathered round the blazing fire in the comfortable dwelling of David Allen, one of the settlers of our village. It was a keen, clear, winter night ; the stars shone with unwonted brilliancy, the vast shadows of the unbroken forest stretched motionless across the pure snow, giving a still more solemn and mystical seeming to the deep-silence which brooded over the scene, undisturbed save by the sudden cry of some night-bird, or wild beast, or an occasional sharp report from the ice-bound ponds in the vicinity, as their glittering mail splintered beneath the quiet moonbeams.

But within there were warmth and comfort, and that happiness which ever arises from the conviction of a day well spent. The great fireplace, though it stretched across nearly one side of the room, was none too spacious for the blazing logs that filled it ; none too wide for the three generations gathered round it.

Alas ! alas ! in these days, when the free, bold spirit of that most useful of household servants is cramped and broken by

confinement in uncouth iron prisons, when we catch glimpses of its cheerful face only through the narrow bars of its iron mask, we can form little conception of its own intrinsic beauty, or how kindly it was wont to fling its warm colorings and delicate shades over the meanest household group, with an artistic grace which Titian might have envied. Like the free, glad element that it was, it danced and crackled in the broad fireplace of Farmer Allen on the night of which we speak, thrusting its long, spear-like tongues between the great logs that fed it, sending forth whole showers of glowing sparks as the farmer occasionally thrust back a protruding stick with his heavy boot, chasing the dark shadows into corners and little recesses, lingering with a softened, delicate gleam on the pale features and silvery locks of the superannuated grandame, as she sat in her antique arm-chair in the "warm corner," nodding occasionally, as if to keep company with the youngest little one at her side, who every few moments rubbed his round eyes with his chubby fists, stared fixedly at the fire, and then the white lids fell drowsily down, and with a sudden nod his dimpled chin rested on his breast. Then, how merrily the blaze winked back at him, and danced lightly over the curly heads of three or four other urchins, to the further end of the huge "settle," to peer into the pretty face of Dorcas Allen, the eldest daughter of the house, as she not unfrequently lifted her eyes from her knitting to the face of her buoyant-hearted, handsome cousin, who sat beside her, conversing with her father and mother, or with a heightened color answered his questions as he turned to her for information with respect to their young companions; for Isaac B—— was a stranger as it were in his native village, having spent most of the last two years under the tuition of the Rev. Abraham Pierson, of Killingworth, or rather *Kennelworth*, as the old colonial records have it, first rector of that infant college which since, under the name of "Old Yale," has, banyan-like, spread its shoots over thirty different states.

Isaac had much to tell of his life at Mr. Pierson's, of his studies and his classmates; and his simple relations lacked not their full quota of local news, — marriages, births, deaths, clearings, raisings, — to say nothing of the "meeting-house," the first "meeting-house" which had been erected during Isaac's absence, and which was an inexhaustible source of pride and interest to the villagers.

"Well, Isaac," said goodman Allen, taking a final squint at the bow-pin he had been whittling, and carefully brushing the shavings from his homespun trousers, "I suppose chopping comes rather hard to you, after idlin' so many months over your books in old Mr. Pierson's study."

"Idling! I only wish you had to study as hard for one week, uncle. But I can manage to keep up with Sam yet, and that is a *little* more than any one else can say in these parts, I fancy," replied the young man, or rather boy, laughing.

"Ha'n't quite forgot your old knack at bragging, Isaac," said the uncle, with a quiet smile. "To listen to you and Sam, one would think you would turn the world over."

"May-be I shall, some day," he replied, gayly. "I shall, at least, try hard to do it; for the top round of the ladder must be mine, uncle, or none; and you see I have a long way to climb."

"Isaac, Isaac, will you *never* be content with your lot?" said the quiet Aunt Esther.

"No, aunt, not as long as I feel that there is a better and a nobler one within my reach."

"Better!" exclaimed goodman Allen, in surprise. "Now hear that! Why, one would think you were a born pauper. Where in the whole township are there two boys better off than Sam and you, I'd like to know? You surely need n't grumble because Sam had the main portion of your father's land. It would go to him, of course, as the eldest. Your portion will *eddicat*e you, and give you a fair start in the

world, to say nothing of your mother's jointure, which will be yours at her death. Never talk in that way, boy; it is downright tempting Providence."

"Uncle David, Aunt Esther!" said the boy, indignantly, "you don't understand me! I don't care for money. Indeed, I despise it, hate it, when I see what slaves it makes of men; how they plod on, year after year, blind and deaf to everything but the clinking of the dollars as they scrape them into their bags. Better die at once than to live a life like that!"

"Child!" said the old grandmother, in her quavering tones, as, roused by the excited voice of her grandson, she reached across goodman Allen, and laid her shrivelled hand commandingly upon his head, "Child! be not wise in thine own conceit. Walk in the footsteps of thy fathers, so shalt thou find safety and peace."

The next moment she had sank back in her usual attitude, and seemed to have lost all consciousness of their presence.

"Grandmother is right, Isaac, though it's a long time since I have heard her speak so connectedly," said David Allen. "Old paths are the wisest and best."

"Under your favor, uncle, I think not. What if Luther, Calvin, Pym, Hampden, Russell and Cromwell, had always plodded along in the old beaten paths? Where would have been our boasted freedom? They dared to think for themselves, and to act out their thoughts, as I hold every true man should do, else he is unworthy of the name!" replied the excited youth.

"Well, well, my lad, I can't say but what you may be right; but it takes a longer head than mine to see through these things," said the uncle, thoughtfully.

"And what is it you wish for—what is it you crave, Cousin Isaac?" said the dove-eyed Dorcas, looking up from her knitting.

He gazed at her full a second before he replied, not daring

or not caring to utter in that presence the one sweet name that rose to his lips ; then reading, in her downcast eyes and glowing cheek, that she partly comprehended his hesitation, he said :

“Fame, Dorcas ! I would be a star among my fellow-men ; not,” he continued, earnestly, catching the reproving eye of his aunt, “from a selfish ambition ; not to set myself above them, disclaiming all fellowship or sympathy with them, but to guide them in the midst of darkness and trouble — to raise them to a higher and purer life. When Mr. Pierson tells us, as he sometimes does, of the famous men that lie buried in Westminster Abbey, and how, as a boy, he used to wander among their monuments, and muse on their lofty deeds, I feel their spirit strong within me. I, too, have a destiny to achieve. I will make myself a monument in the hearts of my countrymen, so that, long after my death, in all times of trouble and danger, men shall turn to my memory as sailors turn to the polar star. I care not where I die, or where my body lies, but I would not have my name forgotten upon earth !”

“I shall never forget one I love,” said Dorcas, sadly.

“No, child, and there is no harm, as I see, in the lad’s wish to be remembered. It’s natural to us all. I myself should feel kinder bad, if I thought, after I’m dead, none of you would take the trouble to put up a decent stone with my name and a verse of Scripture or so on it, to let people know where I lie,” said David Allen. “By the by, Isaac, did I tell you we have set off the green sloping field between the meeting-house and the river, for a burial ground ?”

“No ; but they told me so in the village, as I came along ; and I stopped a moment, and wondered who would be laid there first.”

“So I ask myself every Sabbath,” said Dorcas.

“I guess I know,” said one of the curled heads at the other end of the settle. “Old Goodman Barker. I heard

Deacon Barnes tell father, the other day, that he was most gone."

"Nathan, Nathan!" said the mother, reprovingly.

"Who is it wants a gravestone?" asked the old grandame, suddenly rousing up. "Now I think of it, David," she went on, without waiting for a reply to her query, "you be sure and see that Job Ritton puts on to mine, Abigail, relict of Samuel Allen — not consort, but *relict*, just as it is on old Madam Eaton's stone."

Here Esther Allen interrupted the somewhat lugubrious tone of the conversation, by taking the younger children and the not less childish grandmother to their beds; after which, the others drew closer round the fire, and sat chatting cheerfully until the hour-glass on the shelf had marked the tenth hour since high noon — unusually late for them; but then Isaac's visits were very rare, and he was ever a favorite with his simple-hearted relations.

From his childhood, Isaac's character had been marked by a lofty ambition. Though that mind, which took in not only the present, but the future, as its field of action, must necessarily be widely different in its inner life from those of his more contented playmates and friends, yet he possessed a generosity of character, and a winning kindness of manner, that readily disarmed envy, and rendered him not unworthy of the place he held in their hearts.

Even the sternest of his father's old friends and neighbors, though they sometimes shook their heads very gravely at what they termed his "carnal pride," and "new-fangled notions," liked to hear him talk; for there was a kind of charm, even to them, in the earnest enthusiasm that marked all his words.

We need hardly say how much he was to his widowed mother and brother Sam. He was very young at the time of his father's death; and, as Sam was several years his senior

he regarded him with something like the mingled love of a father and brother. Sam was the reverse of his brother in many things; he had none of his lofty aspirations; he cared little for the world, or the world's opinion; but he had all his good-humor and buoyant spirits; and, if he was proud of anything, it was Isaac.

He was wont to boast that *he* brought him up; and there was n't another lad in the whole township that could manage a wild colt, swing a scythe, or chop into a tree, quite as slick as Isaac; and, during his short vacations, there was always a trial of skill between them in all sorts of labor common to the season. In good sooth, their Uncle Allen, whose good-nature made him a favorite with them, had some reason for calling them a "couple of brags."

The next morning, after the early breakfast was over, the chapter read, and the prayer offered, in the house of David Allen, Isaac started for his home, which lay about a mile and a half distant, saying, in answer to their entreaties for him to abide with them longer, that he had promised Sam to go on to the hill with him that day, to cut the great oak that stood on the edge of a deep gorge, known to this day as the "Great Gulf."

"If you want to see what Sam and I can do, Uncle David, just come along about ten o'clock, and you shall hear a crash," he added, gayly.

"Ay, I am going along up that way myself, by-and-by; and may-be I'll stop and lend you a hand. You'll get tired out by that time, I dare say," replied the uncle, in the same jocular tone.

"Pray be careful, Isaac," said Dorcas; "you and Sam are so headlong when you get together."

"Never fear for us, Dorcas," cried the youth, as he passed through the gate.

"Yet it's a pesky bad spot to fall a tree in, lad," called

David Allen after him. "Be careful, or you will have it at the bottom of the Gulf before you think!"

"Ay, ay, sir!" came ringing back through the clear frosty air.

In about an hour David Allen had drained his mug of gingered cider, drawn on his mittens, and, standing braced out upon the beam of his sled, something after the fashion of the Colossus at Rhodes, drove off to the clearing he was making in the vicinity of the Gulf. The hearth was swept, the old grandame placed in the warm corner, the wheels of the mother and daughter drawn forth, and plied with busy hands and feet, while the somewhat strict discipline, which had been slightly relaxed during Isaac's visit, was again put in force over the younger children. The two eldest were seated on square butts of trees, which served for stools, shelling the bright kernels of the Indian corn into a large wooden tub that stood between them, while the two little ones built cob-houses on the floor, in imitation of the leaning towers of Pisa.

Their voices mingled right pleasantly with the buzzing murmur of the wheels and the monotonous dripping of the melting snow from the eaves, and the whole room was in cheerful contrast to the icy winter without.

Neither the mother nor the daughter seemed in a very garrulous mood, though they occasionally exchanged a word about some household affair, and once or twice spoke of Isaac and his ambitious dreams. Thus the hours passed on; the shadow on the window-sill had almost receded to the noon-mark, when the old grandmother suddenly roused herself, and, looking eagerly round, asked, in her shrill, tremulous tones:

"Where's Isaac? Where's Nabby's boy?"

"Isaac went home before you were up, mother," returned Esther Allen.

"Ah, well, I did n't know what might n't 'a happened to him. Was n't he talking about shrouds or grave-stones, or some

such things, last night? I wonder what makes *him* think about such things?"

"Isaac's head runs upon everything, mother."

"Sure enough, so it does; but I wonder what he should be thinking about his grave-stone for, when I have never quite made up my mind what verse to have Job Ritton put on to mine. Now, mebbly that's what made me dream so last night — I dreamed Isaac was dead. Queer enough that I should dream of Nabby's boy's dying, a'n't it?" she muttered, spreading out the palms of her thin hands to the fire.

"Dream of a death is a sign of a wedding, mother," said Esther Allen, cheerfully.

"Yes, it's a good sign, but I've known it to fail," returned the old dame. "Many a time have I heard Submit Leete's Aunt Leah tell how she dreamed, two nights running, that Hilkiiah Palmer was dead; and, sure enough, he was killed, not long after, in a skirmish between our troops and Prince Rupert's. Kiah was Submit's sweetheart, you know. Well-a-day, this happened a long time ago, before I left home and came over here with your gran'ther. I spose Leah and Submit and they are all gone before this time. Your gran'ther and Submit were kinder cousins."

"Don't you think grandmother more flighty than usual to-day, mother?" said Dorcas, upon whom the old dame's words seemed to make a painful impression, as she rose and walked to the window.

"She was up later than common last night, and a little puts her out," returned the mother, as she left the room for a distaff of flax.

As she again entered the room, Dorcas turned towards her an ashen face, crying, as she pointed to the street:

"O, mother, mother! He is dead! I knew it would be so; I have felt it all the morning!" and the good woman's cheek turned scarcely less pale, as she saw her husband and

Sam lift a human body from their sled, and bear it towards the house.

"It is Isaac — Isaac, mother!" cried the trembling girl, clinging to her for support, while the little ones, frightened by her cries, fled to the same shelter.

"What's all this pother about Isaac?" said the old grandame, querulously. "Why do you cry for him? He's to be a minister, a *larned* gospel minister. Fie, child! such takings-on are unmaidenly and improper."

But Dorcas heard her not, her eyes were fixed on the door, through which her father and cousin soon entered with uneven steps, and bore their burden to a bed that occupied one corner of the spacious room. There was no need to gaze upon that mangled face to tell who the victim was — one glance at the faces of David Allen and his nephew was sufficient.

They gathered around the bed in silence, unbroken for some moments by sobs or groans. The suddenness of the blow had stunned them. Sam's voice was the first to break the fearful spell. "O, my mother — my poor mother!" he groaned, as he stooped his head upon his Aunt Esther's shoulder and wept like a child.

We will not attempt to describe the agony of that hour — we cannot paint the grief that like a gloomy night shut so suddenly down upon the hearts of those stricken ones, extending, ere nightfall, its dim shadow over the whole settlement — we need not, for there are few, among those who will read this sketch, over whose threshold the invisible footsteps of Death have not passed.

Two days after, the body of the young student, followed by almost every family in the settlement, was borne along the winding forest path to the recently erected house of public worship. After a brief but touching address by the young pastor, it was again borne out and laid down in the grave. His destiny was accomplished — his yearning wish

realized — but, O, how differently from what he had dreamed ! His name is still held in remembrance among us, but not for wisdom, or power, or deeds of high emprise — but, as the *first* tenant of our village grave-yard. Even to this day we point to his moss-grown head-stone, and read, “ Isaac B——, 1727.”

V.

MARY GRAYSON.

• “Man is God’s image, but the poor man is Christ’s stamp to boot.”

“But, my dear Miss R——, let me assure you that this sympathy for paupers is quite needless. Where, in the whole world, is there such excellent provision for the poor as in our own New England? The judge, my husband, who should know something of this matter, says our paupers are much better off than we. They have no taxes to pay, nothing to be anxious about — only to eat and drink, and, perhaps, labor a little.”

And my good, proper, self-satisfied, somewhat aristocratic, but really kind-hearted, “fat, fair and forty” friend, Mrs. Judge Lawson, who spoke thus, sank back on the sofa, into her usual attitude of graceful repose, with a look of commiseration for my ignorance (I not having borne the weight of public affairs, as the wife of a judge).

“Indeed!” I replied; “then, I suppose the judge, and, of course, yourself, would gladly exchange your beautiful house and establishment for a home in the almshouse; or, perhaps, you would prefer being put up at auction, to be struck off at the lowest living price per week, to some coarse, brutal man, whose aim would be to make you do the most work on the cheapest living. How much care and anxiety you would escape!”

“How absurd! Of course, there are different stations in life. This search for duty out of our own sphere is what creates so much confusion in the world,” replied my friend,

with some show of vexation. "But, excuse me, my dear, your secluded habits have not adapted you to appreciate what the judge calls the manifold relations of life."

"Pardon me, Mrs. Lawson; it was because I do feel these relations so deeply, that I stood beside that old pauper's grave to-day, and witnessed the hurried, heartless manner of her burial. Our poor-laws may be very wise, but, when I heard the circumstances of her death, I could not help feeling that the spirit with which they are applied is very different from that of Him who left us the poor as part of his dying legacy. Our social life, though rich and beautiful in many respects, has some barbarism lingering in it."

"Heaven save us! What strange ideas people do run away with!" exclaimed the judge's lady, raising herself erect on the sofa. "I am astonished, my dear, that a person of your correct taste and excellent judgment should indulge such fancies. What *could* induce you to go to that old woman's funeral?"

"Respect for the character of one who, in very humble and trying circumstances, has lived a true and noble life."

"Did you know her?"

"Yes." And, catching the inquisitive glance of my friend's daughter, Eveline, a rose-lipped girl of sixteen, whose sense of *les convenances* I had somewhat offended by taking her to a pauper's funeral, I added, "If you are inclined to listen I will tell you something of her story."

"O, do, Miss R——!" exclaimed Eveline, snatching a low ottoman, and placing herself at my feet. "I do so love to hear stories, and we all know mamma's *penchant* that way. And, pray, begin at the beginning; for, when I see such old shrivelled women, I can scarcely believe that they were ever young and fair."

"Perhaps Mary Grayson never realized the standard of beauty peculiar to young ladies of sixteen, dear Eva; but she once had youth and health, which are ever intrinsically

beautiful, and a goodness of heart and cheerfulness of disposition, which transfigured, as it were, her somewhat irregular features, and gave her words and actions a charm which does not belong to mere physical beauty.

"She was the only child of her mother, who died when she was about ten years old. Her mother's place was soon occupied, not *filled*, by another woman, who, though naturally kind and well-meaning, from feeble health and an excessively nervous temperament, was ill-calculated for the trials, toils and cares of married life, especially when a rapidly increasing family, together with narrow circumstances, made incessant demands on her health and patience. Of course, the atmosphere of Miles Grayson's house was not always clear and bright as a June day. It more frequently resembled a November fog; and it would be idle to say it was not often so thick and dark that the cheerful warmth of Mary's heart could not gush through it. But if she could not always banish the cloud from her father's brow, nor soothe the fretful spirit of her step-mother, nor even transform the rising group of children into little angels, yet, by the grace of God, she could bear all with patience, which is, perhaps, the next best thing.

"One thing is certain—they all loved her. True, it was a too selfish love, that appreciated not so much her unwearied devotion as their need of it. Her true worth they appreciated as little as they did the quiet sunshine that stole through the broken windows to glorify their mean room. But, when one is beloved, even in this poor way, the path of life seems less barren and difficult.

"Thus passed ten years, for time does not stand still even at the doors of the unhappy. Then came death, under the form of a malignant fever, and carried off the father and four of the children. A still heavier burden was now laid on Mary. The expenses of sickness exhausted what little property her father had left; the oldest remaining child, a boy

of nine, could do little to aid her; and it was difficult to say which made the largest demand on her patience and love — the feeble, despairing mother, or the poor, puny baby. Poor Mary! She saw how much was to be done, and how little there was to do with, and almost gave way in despair.

“Besides, there was another sore trial. Like all young maidens she had her dreams of the future; and, for the last two years, she had not dreamed alone. There was one, an active, intelligent young mechanic, who appreciated her worth, and who had spoken to her words that had flooded her heart with happiness. They were both poor. Therefore they had decided to wait until the young man could lay by something, before they attempted to realize together their dreams of married life. Mary was no subtle reasoner, but she had a strong sense of duty, aided, no doubt, in this case, by her sad experience of the miseries of poverty, and its frequent, though not necessary, accompaniments — ill-humor and sourness of spirit.

“She was deeply attached to this young man; but now, when he came to her, with kind words and loving looks, and spoke hopefully and beautifully of their future, though she laid up every word in her heart, she mournfully shook her head and wept, from joy and sorrow — joy that he was so good and true — sorrow that, in her present circumstances, she could do nothing to bless his life or make their dream real; for how could she leave her helpless mother and the little ones for a life of happiness? Would not that little babe, with its hollow eyes and its limbs swollen with scrofula, haunt her, even in a husband’s bosom? And how could she consent to burden him with these hapless ones? It could not be.

“The hopes that had blossomed so brightly in her dreary path were too dear to be easily renounced. Long, earnestly and prayerfully, she strove to choose the right; and, to her, this now seemed to be self-renunciation. I will not say this

decision was made known to her lover calmly, or without many tears, for she was a loving *woman*. But I know that all his expostulations failed to change it, and that he, at last, in some measure, felt its necessity.

"This trial over, and her thoughts all bent on what seemed duty, the way of life grew clearer to her. She found a place for her little brother with a kind farmer, and directed all her energies to the task of supplying the wants of her mother and infant sister."

"And her lover, Miss R——," interrupted Eveline; "did her lover take her at her word? Did he make no more efforts to win her?"

"He did not give her up easily, Eva. For a long time he cherished the hope of a 'good time coming.' He was good and true, and more than once sought to change her decision. But, as the years went, through the misconduct of an older brother, his own mother became dependent on him for support, and he finally took Mary's friendly counsel, and married a worthy girl who had long been a friend to the both."

"How horribly unromantic and common-place!" exclaimed Eva.

"Yes, my dear; but your grandfather was always more remarkable for good sense, than romance, I believe."

"My grandfather! You are joking, Miss R——."

"No, indeed. I mean it seriously."

"You are certainly mistaken, my dear Miss R——," broke in Mrs. Lawson. "It cannot be that you are speaking of Judge Lawson's father."

"It certainly was as I say. Mary Grayson's lover was no other than your husband's father."

"How strange! Now, I do recollect hearing the judge say, that, owing to some reverses, the family was, at one time, quite reduced."

"O, yes, mamma! Don't you remember when papa was sick, a great many years ago, he used to make such pretty

chairs and tables for my dolls, and how he told Fred. and me, what nice times he and Aunt Mills used to have playing with the chips and shavings in his father's shop; and how pleased they used to be with a pair of new shoes, and all that?"

I cast a rather curious glance at my friend. For a moment a light frown darkened her smooth brow. Then, dismissing her judicial dignity, she gave way to the revived feelings of the time, when, as the wife of a promising young attorney, she was rationally happy in her husband and children. She laughed in every feature and motion, as she replied:

"Yes, indeed; and how, regularly as the day came, you littered our only parlor; and Fred., the little mischief, bored holes in the carpet — all the carpet we had; and how mortified I was when Senator Smith and his wife called and found our parlor transformed into a workshop."

Rejoiced to see my friend, by the force of memory and love, bursting the chill shroud of conventional pride which for some years she had endeavored to wear, I pressed her hand and went on with my story.

"Mary's untiring devotion to her mother and sister awakened much sympathy in her behalf among the neighbors. A kind neighbor taught her to weave; and, in those days, when the wealthiest thought it no disgrace to wear homespun, and when every young maiden was required to furnish her linen-chest with the labor of her own hands, weaving, though laborious, was a rather lucrative employment. The whirr of her shuttle and the stroke of her lathe were heard from morning till night. Yet how few of the good housewives and merry maidens, who admired the firm texture of her cloth, or the tasteful patterns of her table-linen and coverlets, understood the disappointed hopes and bitter tears which the poor girl had inwoven with them!

"Then came a time, and a sore time it was, when the mother could no longer bear the noise of the loom. For

many months she was confined to her bed, a prey to all manner of hypochondriac fancies. The slightest noise, a breath of air, even the draught through the keyhole, she fancied would cause her immediate death. For many weeks, Mary sat in the close, unhealthy atmosphere of that small room, ministering to her capricious wants, or soothing the fretfulness of little Ellen, while every spare moment was devoted to her needle. At length, God mercifully sent a release, by taking the mother from earth. I say mercifully, Eveline. Look not so surprised, for death is oftener a friend in disguise to its victims, and those near them, than we suspect. I said to your washer-woman, this morning :

“‘Your Aunt Sarah is dead, I hear.’

“‘Ah yes, Miss!’ she replied with much feeling ; and then added, ‘She has been waiting to go a long time, and now grandfather and grandmother can have their bed-room again. They will be more comfortable, and grandfather’s pension will go much further.’

“This was not want of affection, Eveline ; but poverty is a hard master, and food and room are essential needs. For some years after the death of her mother, Mary supported herself and her little sister comfortably, and even laid by a small sum to aid them in case of sickness and misfortune. John, the brother, was placed at a trade, and all seemed to go well.

“She had much joy, also, in the thought that her undeviating patience and kindness had aided to work a change in the heart of her invalid sister. Ellen was not without strong affections, but her temper was irritable and violent. She was by no means a pleasant companion for the children of the neighbors ; yet she was extremely sensitive, and their slights, together with the many privations of her condition, tended to produce in her an envious, discordant state of mind. As she grew older, these feelings developed themselves more fully, until, at the time of her mother’s death. she was a very disa-

greeable, unhappy child. But pain, that 'God-commissioned angel,' as one of my friends calls it, is often sent to sow the seed of eternal life; and, watered and tended as it was by the unwearied love of Mary, this seed, in the fulness of time, produced in the heart of Ellen a rich harvest.

"She became patient, meek, self-sacrificing, and, by true inward goodness, learned the great secret of making herself agreeable to others. Thus, when the scrofula fell into her eyes, neither she nor Mary felt as others who said the greatest of all trials had come upon her. They knew that an envious, unhappy disposition is far worse, for that blinds the soul. Mary shed sorrowful tears when the darkness, that was to shut out the beautiful world from her sister's eyes, began to steal over them; but they bowed themselves to this stroke.

"Then Mary felt her privations most keenly. She could not bear to leave Ellen alone, day after day, in her darkened, solitary room; but she could not see to sew there, and their daily bread depended on her labor, for their little hoard had been eagerly expended, with the vain hope of saving the poor girl's sight. Every moment she could steal from her work she passed in Ellen's room; it was not dark in their hearts, though the brightness of God's sunlight was carefully excluded, and the shadow rested on their faces. After many weeks, Ellen came forth from that darkened room, but totally blinded. She soon learned, by Mary's patient teaching, to fill the quills for the shuttle, and to do many other little things; and thus, humbly and trustingly, they went hand in hand on the way of life for nearly thirty years, until the blind one passed from the darkness of this earth into the light of perfect day.

"Mary was now a gray-haired woman. The long years of confinement and excessive toil had broken her constitution; but not until the last care was taken from her, did she feel her weakness. Still she strove on, and gradually her serene,

motherly face, became a gladness and a light in all those dwellings about her where sickness, sorrow, or trouble, had taken up its abode. She was an angel to all who suffered. Her experience of trial and suffering had ennobled her. It gave weight and efficacy to her creed, which she invariably whispered in the ears of the sorrowing, 'We know not what is best; but our Lord, he doeth all things well.'

"There are some gentle souls, who, through the blessing of God, seem to have come early into harmony with the Highest, whose lives seem attuned to some inward music, so quietly and gracefully do they pass along the ways of earth. Others there are, whose destiny is to be made perfect through suffering. By reason of passion and temptation, they are 'without form and void, and darkness is on the face of the deep.' For these there is combat and suffering, before they can begin to utter truly the 'Miserere mei Deus,' and feel that the Eternal Spirit broods over their life. At length, in such souls, the jarring, conflicting elements are charmed into peace at His voice, and their sad 'Miserere' changes to the joyful but solemn 'De profundis'—'Out of the deeps have I called unto thee, O Lord.' There are others, meek and patient, who, through sins and misfortunes not their own, are compelled to bear the cross always, onward to the grave. These belong, chiefly, to what are termed the 'lower classes'—the Helots, the burden-bearers of life. Among these, we may find angels on earth; but, often, not till they die do their nearest friends rightly appreciate them, and discover that they have had angels with them. Mary Grayson was one of the unobtrusive, unnoticed servants of humanity.

"For many years before her death, the conduct of her brother John had caused her much sorrow. He was a good workman, but of an unstable, restless temperament, steady to nothing, but constantly roaming from place to place in search of better work or wages. Finally, he married a young girl, whose life had been passed chiefly in a factory, and who

knew little or nothing of domestic affairs. Matters went badly with them. They both became intemperate, and their large family of children, instead of awakening in them a sense of the duties and responsibilities of life, only proved a source of discord and misery. They went from place to place, until, about a year ago, they took up their residence in E——. There the miserable mother sickened and died. John, roused for a while from his habits, remembered his sister Mary, and wrote to her, bewailing his errors, and beseeching her to come to him.

“E—— was twenty miles distant; ‘Aunt’ Mary was old and feeble, and, besides, she had never in her life undertaken such a journey. The neighbors advised her not to go. But she thought of the children, hoped to bless her brother, and went. A miserable abode, indeed, was that which awaited her. She found her brother fast approaching a drunkard’s grave. His children were ragged, quarrelsome and ungovernable. But love and patience can do much, even in such a place; and gradually the discordant elements began to yield to her power. She was like an angel of hope among them; but, it must be confessed, it was sometimes almost impossible to feel or hear her through the tempest of violent passion that was apt to rage there. Her brother died, but she had the joy of knowing that he left the world sober and penitent. Her mission on earth was now to close. The next morning after the funeral she did not rise as usual; and when the frightened children gathered round her bed, she was speechless from paralysis.

“The town authorities of E—— now took the family in hand. The children were sent as paupers to the places of their birth, and Mary was carried to the almshouse, where she remained several weeks, until she showed some symptoms of amendment. Then she was placed in a common lumber wagon, and sent to her native place. She was born and lived in the second school society in this town. But the

driver brought her here; and when they proceeded to take her from the wagon, they lifted out a corpse."

"But, surely, there was no need of such inhuman proceedings!" exclaimed the judge's lady.

"Certainly not; but then she was only an old pauper, you know; and it is not the fashion to be very attentive or delicate with paupers."

"But the laws require paupers to be taken care of!"

"Ah! yes; but I tell you it is not so much the laws I speak of, as the spirit in which they are applied. The selectmen of E—— would be very much astonished if any one should charge them with inhumanity. They acted for the public, and their chief aim was to save their town unnecessary trouble and expense. In my childhood I knew and loved Aunt Mary; but, in the shifting scenes of my life, I had, for several years, lost sight of her. The particulars of her death I gathered from one of her old neighbors, who had walked nearly three miles to attend her funeral.

"‘Only to think of it, Miss R——,’ she sobbed, ‘that she who was so good, and who so patiently fulfilled the blessed words, “Bear one another’s burdens,” could not be permitted to die under shelter, like a Christian!’"

"But, my dear friend," said Mrs. Lawson, "this case is an exception to the general rule. There are few such cases, I trust. Believe me, if I had known her, I would have attended to her myself;" and she spoke with a look of earnest sincerity, that made her really beautiful. I replied:

"I do believe you; but, until we learn to look beyond the external and accidental, we shall not be likely to appreciate such characters. But Eva, dear, what is it?" I inquired, on seeing Eveline look in my face, with an expression of anxiety and hesitation.

"I am afraid you will think poorly of me, Miss R——, but I wish to tell you how silly I was to-day, when you left the road to Mrs. Granger's and fell into that funeral proces-

sion. I wondered what you could mean by mingling with such meanly-dressed people. And when Annette Granger and her brother drove past, as we stood by the grave, to escape their notice I let go your arm, and slipped behind that great, fat, horribly-dressed woman, to whom you spoke afterwards. But henceforth," she earnestly continued, "I will be wiser. I deem it an honor to have followed that old pauper to the grave, for she seems to me to have been a true heroine."

"Yes, my love," replied the mother, "and in that sphere of life, and in circumstances where it is, perhaps, most difficult to live heroically, and yet where, I fear, such lives are most often found. We will thank our friend for her story, and try to remember the *lesson*," she continued, glancing significantly at me; as she passed her hand caressingly through her daughter's curls.

Now God be praised, I thought. If Mary Grayson can look down from heaven upon them, and see how her "works follow her," how they have power to thaw the benumbing ice of conventionalism from the heart of my friend, will she not say, even of her pauper death, "We know not what is best — He doeth all things well"?

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VI.
THE MILLER.

CHAPTER I.

“Full merrily rings the millstone round,
Full merrily rings the wheel,
Full merrily gushes out the grist—
Come, taste my fragrant meal.

“The miller he’s a worldly man,
And maun hae double fee;
So draw the sluice in the churl’s dam,
And let the stream gae free.”

Song of the Elfin Miller.

FAR up amid the deep gorges, the tangled thickets and cedar groves of old Tetoket, spring forth numberless mountain brooks, that come leaping and tumbling down the rugged mountain sides, calling to one another in merry, musical voices, like children at hide-and-seek, until wearied with their sport, and catching, as it were, the deep solemn voice of the ocean, they mingle their waters in one channel, and with hushed voices go winding quietly through our village, to seek the bosom of their mighty mother.

After this “meeting of the waters,” the stream winds along for about two miles, through a broken valley, then making a sudden turn, finds itself imprisoned between two hills, across the southern opening of which is a massive dam, built of great black logs, against which the indignant water dashes and foams, and then subsiding, drips, drips, with an indescribable,

mournful murmur, as if bewailing its fate, while the distant voice of old ocean calls in vain for her child. The eastern bank rises in a high bluff, then stretches away in wide pastures; but on the west the ground slopes gradually back, and, sheer from the water's edge, is studded with magnificent oaks, walnuts and maples, interspersed with here and there a dark and stately cedar. The pond stretches back a half-mile or so, and along its margin float the queenly water-lilies, like fairy boats, intermingled with tall flags and the tassels of the drooping alders. Close by the dam, and half overhanging the water, as if it ever had a fancy to topple in, stands the weather-beaten mill, with its great, skeleton-looking wheel, which, like some giant monster, grinds and pounds the limpid water, until it exhales away in glittering spray, or, escaping from its clutches, sighs faintly amid the willow-roots and rushes that fringe its bed below the bridge. The floor within is strewed with sacks and powdered over with meal, over which the tracks of the miller and his visitors describe all manner of figures; the cobwebs overhead are coated over until they look like frosted flowers, and the

“ Very air about the door
Is misty with the floating meal.”

Here *dwelt* Jedediah Sewall, the miller, for the farm-house a few rods west was to him nothing more than a lodging-house. Miller Jed, as he was generally called, was a little, withered man, with joints distorted by hard labor, and muscles of iron. Flesh he had none to speak of, and the tough brown skin stretched over the joints, and clung to the bones, as if it had some time undergone a baking process. In his mealy suit, with his glittering black eyes peering out from beneath the brim of his white hat and powdered hair, he looked very much like one of the great spiders coiled up in their white webs on the rafters overhead; and the resemblance was true in more points than one, for, like the spider,

whatever came within his clutches never found its way out again. For more than forty years he had lived in the mill, sniffing the mealy air, shouldering heavy sacks, and compelling the free, glad waters to toil for him, while, with his keen eyes bent over the trough, with his long bent fingers he scooped out handful after handful of soft white meal for toll. People said that his fingers were ever ready bent for grasping, but that no one had ever known them to relax under the influence of charity and human love.

Money, money was his dream by day and night—his god; and to it he had sacrificed his manhood—his humanity. True, after maturely counting the cost, he married, late in life, his housekeeper, to save her wages; wisely considering that she would eat no more as his wife than as his housekeeper, and, besides, in this way, he should gain possession of not only what he had paid her, but also the small sum which she already possessed when she came there. There was one result of this marriage which, although it could hardly fail, in the end, of exerting a humanizing influence over him, seemed for many years to render him only more miserly and grasping. This was the birth of a son, whose existence cost his mother her life. It would be wrong to say that the miller did not feel some unusual thrills about his heart as he gazed upon the helpless infant, or a strange sensation of terror and awe as he looked upon the rigid features of her whom he had called wife. But scarce were the clods of the grave-yard pressed over her, when his thoughts returned to their wonted channel, and avarice began to repine that she did not live to nurse the child. It would have been such a saving.

But, as Death is deaf alike to the voice of Avarice and Love, the old woman who had officiated as nurse to the mother was retained to take charge of the child, which throve finely under her care, and manifested a fondness for her which gladdened the lone old creature's heart. Isaac, for so they called the boy, was about seven years old before Miller Jed

thought of sending him to school. Not that the boy was altogether ignorant, for Widow Barker had taught him the names and habits of the various birds and squirrels that made their homes in the woods behind the house ; he knew all the herbs that grew about there, and their uses ; and something too of ichthyology he knew, though if old "Grannie Barker," as he called her, had heard that term applied to her lessons, she would have lifted her great-eyed spectacles, and rubbed her forehead in sore amazement. Nevertheless, she had often taken him up the borders of the pond with her, in search of greens, or some rare herbs, holding him closely by the hand, — for though Miller Jed seldom noticed him, yet, ever since his wife died, he had manifested a great dread of death, and had strictly forbidden Isaac to go near the pond alone, — and pointed out to him the minnows glancing and poisoning themselves in the clear waters, the rosy-gilled roach, and the slender, graceful perch. Then, during the long winter evenings, the old woman brought into requisition her library, consisting of her Bible and hymn-book, and a strangely retentive memory of the most remarkable cases in Fox's Book of Martyrs, which she had met with some time in her younger days. With these the child became early familiar, and to their influence perhaps may be traced his fate as a man. He was a bright, gentle, affectionate boy, a little more thoughtful than is usual for children of his age, owing to the solitary life he led with his old nurse, for they saw no company, save when some farmer chanced to call to see some very choice specimens of grain, or some poor debtor, whose mismanagement or misfortunes had given the old miller a claim upon his property.

How long his father would have kept him at home, with no teacher save his old nurse, if the boy himself had not expressed a wish to go to school, we cannot say. But all through the pleasant spring days the child had seen a tall, spare woman, leading a little girl about his own size, come along the winding cart-path which led through the woods, until they reached

a pair of bars by the road-side. Here, after helping the little girl over, and placing a gayly-colored basket in her hand, the woman left her, and retraced her path through the woods, often turning to mark the progress of the child as she moved down the green lane. And at about the same hour in the afternoon, when the shadows began to lengthen, the little girl came tripping up the lane, swinging her basket in her hand, and was met, either by the pale-faced woman, or a white haired old man.

Isaac was very curious about these people, and Widow Barker told him that the child was Mercy Ward, on her way to school; and that she lived with her mother and grandfather at the distance of more than a mile on the other side of the woods. "And an old rickety-looking place enough it is now," she added, more to herself than the child, "though I mind me of the time when the Wards held their heads as high as anybody; though for that matter I can't say but they do now; for old Captain Adam Ward has pride enough himself for ten generations."

Widow Barker was no great friend of schools; she thought it a crime, deserving little short of hanging, to shut children up all day to pore over books; and, as Isaac had gained all his ideas from her, he heartily pitied the little girl, and thought she had much better stay and play with him. He longed to tell her so; but he was a shy boy, and contented himself with watching her morning and evening, as she skipped along by the side of her mother, or with a more demure manner tried to make her uneven steps correspond to the regular pace of her grandfather. It sometimes happened that she arrived at the bars some moments before her friends came to meet her; and, on one of these occasions, Isaac, who had been gathering raspberries along the fence, ventured to approach her, and, holding up the purple fruit, strung after a primitive fashion, taught him by "Grannie Barker," on a long spire of herds-grass, offered to share it with her. The offer

was readily accepted, and when Jane Ward came to meet her child, she found her seated on a large flat stone by the side of Miller Jed's boy, her lips and fingers stained to a deep crimson by the rich fruit, gravely striving to overcome his prejudices against schools. Isaac stood on the spot, watching them until the trees hid them from his sight; then he walked thoughtfully into the house, and, to the consternation of Mrs. Barker, declared he was going to school. Stories of cruel teachers, of great, reckless boys, of perils by the way-side, made no impression upon him, and the old woman, declaring it to be her honest belief that the child was "possessed," appealed to his father. The miller seemed struck with the idea, and said the child must know something about reading, writing and arithmetic, to get along in the world, and might as well begin then. Again the old woman brought up her fears, and, when she went on to speak of the possibility of the child's being gored to death by some vicious animal in the street, he involuntarily glanced towards the corner of the room where the dead body of his wife had lain, and said, hastily, that she could ask old Ward's grand-daughter to call for him every day. What protection there could be in the presence of little Mercy Ward, Miller Jed would have found it difficult to tell; possibly, even his hard, selfish nature felt the power of innocence.

CHAPTER II.

"The lovely cottage, with its own dear brook,
Its own small pasture, almost its own sky!"

"Ward's Hollow" is a green, pear-shaped valley, shut in between ranges of low, wooded hills. A small, clear brook, that has its source in some hidden spring beneath the rocks on the northern side, winds leisurely through it, as if loth to leave its sheltered precincts, until, catching a view of the

gleaming mill-stream through an opening at the southern extremity of the valley, it dashes forward with a new impetus, like a delighted school-boy, to overtake its companion.

At the northern end the hills assume a bolder front, and are seamed with gray ledges of gneiss, amid the crevices of which grow many wild flowers, and queer, grotesque-shaped trees, butternuts principally, at all angles with the horizon. The ground at the foot of these bluffs is the highest portion of the valley, and here, directly facing the southern opening, stood the old Ward farm-house.

Here, at the first settlement of our village, Adam, ninth son of Corporal Adam Ward of Ely, one of Cromwell's old troopers, raised his rude hut of logs, and manifested the same energy and perseverance in subduing the wild forest, as had animated his father, when he fell, at the head of his band, at the celebrated siege of Basing House. And well did mother earth reward his toil. The valley, or Hollow, as he named it, lay like a rich garden smiling up to heaven, and in the course of years he added to it many broad acres beyond that circle of green hills. They were a kind-hearted, upright, rigidly honest race, somewhat opinionated perhaps, but respected by all men; and thus three generations went down to the grave, leaving Adam, the grandfather of little Mercy, the sole heritor of the name and estate. He was very young when his father died, but so truly did his mother train him in the ways of those who had gone before, that, when the revolutionary war broke out, it seemed as if the very spirit of old Adam of Ely still breathed in the breast of his descendant. He joined the troops, where his cool bravery, his instinctive military skill and intelligence, coupled with his unswerving integrity, soon won him a commission. When the unrighteous strife ceased, he returned to his neglected estate, poorer by hundreds in purse, but rich in the love and esteem of his fellow-officers, and the admiration and reverence of his townsmen. Most of what was called the "Outside Land," which lay without the

hills, was sold to pay off debts contracted during the war, but the Hollow remained, and he diligently set himself to repairing the inroads made upon it by so many years of neglect. This done, he became more and more conscious of the loneliness of the old farm-house, for his mother had lived barely long enough to welcome him home. He was still in the prime of life, and with his high character and military fame, which was something more than a prestige in those days, he might have chosen a bride from any of the wealthy families of his acquaintance, with a dower sufficient to have repaired his shattered fortunes; but he passed by them all, and, seeking out Mercy Lindsay, his early playmate in the humble farm-house, where since the death of her friends she had won her daily bread by the labor of her own hands, he took her to his bosom as his wife, companion and friend. They had but one child, and for several years this green earth contained no happier family than the one at Ward's Hollow. James was an active, spirited boy, and, as he grew older, the green valley became too narrow for him. He longed to go out and mingle with the great current of life, and all that his father told him of his own experience there only increased his longing. It was a sad thing to his parents when they became convinced that a quiet agricultural life would never content him; but they were too wise to force upon him an occupation which he so thoroughly disliked; therefore they procured him a situation as clerk in a mercantile house in the neighboring city, in which, after two or three years' service in that capacity, he became a partner.

For some years all seemed to go well. He married a pleasant, excellent girl, and two children were welcomed as a veritable gift from God by them, and, most especially, by the solitary old couple at the Hollow. These children spent much of their time there, and their presence seemed to lead the grandparents back on the track of their youth. It was pleasant to see little Adam imitating the erect, military bearing of his

grandfather, or going through with the evolutions of the drill, while the old soldier gave out the word of command. Then his epaulets, cocked hat and sword, preserved with such fond care, were a never-ending subject of interest to them. How many times the little boy looked at that tarnished cockade and faded plume, and wondered when he should be big enough to wear a hat like that!

Though Adam Ward had not passed through those years of military service without knowing pinching hunger and sore fatigue, yet he knew little of those bitter sorrows which touch the soul. It seemed as if Providence, in its wisdom, had reserved this experience for his age. A malignant fever, which passed like a scourge through the city, numbered James and his little boy among its first victims; and so sudden was the blow, that it was not until long after he had seen them laid down by the side of the son of the old Cromwellian in the village grave-yard, that he could realize its truth. His was not a grief to find vent in words; like his love, it was deep, silent and strong, and there came many, many weary hours, in which he was ready to exclaim, with Syrian Job, "He hath stripped me of my glory and taken the crown from my head; my hope hath he removed like a tree." The sudden announcement of the bankruptcy of the firm of which his son had been a partner was scarcely able to rouse him from this mood; but when it was found that there was strong reason for suspecting the honesty of the other partner, indignation and contempt came to his aid. But this was not the worst. Not only the cash capital which he had advanced for his son was swallowed up, but examination proved that they had used his name for an amount which his whole estate would barely cover. He knew that this was unjust, and appealed to the law; but it was proved that on one or two occasions he had, in the negotiation of some small sum, given them liberty to use his name, and the case went against him. None save those whose lives are passed in some quiet nook in the green

country, on acres that have descended to them through many generations, can form a true conception of the old man's grief when called upon to part with his farm. Those fields were a family biography. Each tree, shrub, rock, brook, fence and gate, were so many chapters of it, and well he understood their language. O, it was a bitter trial to that white-haired old man! Not the less so, that these beloved fields were to pass into the possession of one who had never been known to manifest anything like sorrow or sympathy for others; one for whose character he felt a strong dislike, not to say contempt. But what cared Miller Jed for old Adam Ward's misfortunes or opinions, when he saw before him the prospect of grasping at one clutch the green meadows and fine pastures of the Hollow? He had had his lynx-eye upon it for years; he had counted over and over how much more it might be made to yield than it did under the old-fashioned system of agriculture pursued by its ancient owners; he counted much on James' inexperience, and chuckled inwardly when he went into a store; then he began to mine in the dark, like one of the rats of his own mill; he watched all the movements of the firm, and, when he found them pressed for funds, had his agents ready to lend on old Adam Ward's security; and should he forego his long-cherished plan, for the sake of proving himself a kind neighbor? Not he; he would "have his bond."

There was one alternative for the old soldier; he might mortgage his acres for a sum sufficient to pay off the debt, and many of his old friends advised him to this course. But his independent spirit could not brook this; he had been a free man all his life, and would not consent, in his old age, to become a servant; therefore, he let it all go, all but the old house and a bit of meadow on which it stood. Still the fields retained their old name; for, like the excellent qualities of the ancient owners, it was too strongly associated with the settlement and history of the village to be easily relinquished. At

the time of the commencement of this story, the old captain's wife had been laid by the side of her son, and James' widow and little daughter, to whom poverty had left no other shelter since the death of the husband and father, continued to reside with the old man, and the industry and good management of the former did much towards lengthening out the old soldier's pension, while the scrupulous care with which she sought to keep everything about the house as he had been accustomed to see it from his youth, and the reverence and respect with which she treated him, made her well worthy of the daughter's place which she held in his heart. Little Mercy, — how dark that old house would have been without her! — was a sun-beam, a hope that ever went before them, casting a serene light on their otherwise cloudy future.

CHAPTER III.

“Childhood, with sunny brow,
And floating hair.”

June, with her rich, vigorous life, and thousand musical voices, revelled in Ward's Hollow. It had been one of those “heavenly days which cannot die,” and the sun, as if enamored of earth and beauty, lingered on the western hill-tops, while his level rays streamed across the Hollow, and fell on the wooded range on the east, like a baptism of fire. The whole beautiful valley was like an enchanted lake filled with waters of the hue of burnished gold, through which the white blossoms of the daisies looked forth like stars. The evening meal at the old farm-house was over, and the old captain sat in his great arm-chair, in front of the open door, gazing over the beautiful scene with a serene countenance, for, in submitting to the discipline awarded him, he had learned that in transferring the title-deeds of his estate to another, he had not parted with his inherent right to its beauty. The widow

plied her needle by an open window, through which the faint west wind brought the rich perfume of the many fragrant flowers and herbs, that a century's care had collected in the old garden beneath, while little Mercy sat on the door-step; that low, flat, well-worn stone step, with its edges half buried in the thick turf, constructing various chains and curls from the long stalks of the dandelions, with which she had filled her apron, alternately talking to her grandfather and mocking a whippoorwill, that nightly poured forth his plaintive strain from the hedge behind the house. Suddenly she threw aside her work, and, turning to the old man, said :

"Grandfather, that little boy wants to go to school with me, and I shall like it very much. His mother, or the woman that he lives with, asked us to-night if I might not stop for him every day."

"And what boys do you know, I should like to ask?" replied the old man, laying his great hand on her shining hair.

"Why, Isaac — he said his name was Isaac. Isaac —, the boy that lives in the house by the mill."

Something like an expression of pain passed over the grandfather's face, as he turned to her mother, and asked :

"What is this, Jane? Does she mean Jedediah Sewall's child?"

"Yes, father; I should have spoken to you about it when we came home, but you was busy in the garden; besides," she added, with a glance at Mercy, "I did not know but we had better wait until we were alone."

Jane Ward was unwilling to have her child catch aught of that bitterness of spirit which she and her father could not help feeling at the name of Miller Jed — a name which, as if by common consent, was seldom or never mentioned at the old farm-house.

The old man understood her motive, and, sending Mercy

off on some slight errand, listened with compressed lips to the miller's request, made known by the old housekeeper.

"Have nothing to do with them, Jane!" he exclaimed, hastily, as she ceased speaking.

"Such was my first thought," she replied; "but the little boy plead so hard, that I could hardly find it in my heart to refuse him."

"Ay, a double-faced imp, like his father, I dare say. Let the children remain strangers. No good ever *did* or *can* come from knowing any of that race."

"Perhaps you are right, father. But, after all," she added, after a moment's silence, "the poor child must not be blamed for his father's faults; and, when I think of him, with no one to care for him but that hard-hearted, selfish old man, I cannot help pitying him. Somehow, he reminded me of our little Adam."

The old man arose and walked the floor for some moments; at length he paused before the window, and said:

"And you think we might possibly do something towards making this child a better man than his father. Is it not so, Jane?" he added, with a sad smile.

"We could try, father," was the reply.

"Well, you may be right, but I have little faith. I have known Jed Sewall, man and boy, for sixty years, and I never knew him otherwise than mean, grasping and underhanded. But, as you say, his child is motherless; and, as Mercy will have to associate with him, if he attends school, you can try. Let her wait for him at the bars, for on no account would I have her enter his house."

It mattered little to Miller Jed in what spirit a favor was granted, so long as he was sure of it; therefore he hardly listened to the condition attached to this. In fact, he was quite willing Mercy should keep out of his house, for who knew what mischief Isaac and she might not commit there together?

Thus the children became schoolmates, and it was not long before their little fingers began to smooth the tangled skein of life between the two families, at least, as far as Isaac was concerned. He often waited on the flat stone by the bars, until Mercy's friends came to meet her; and, perhaps, as with Jane Ward, the memory of little Adam plead in the old soldier's heart for the child, quite as much as his own ingenuous face and winning manners; at any rate, the old man's prejudice wore slowly away; and, as the weeks passed on, Isaac became not only a frequent but a welcome guest at the Hollow, though, in obedience to her grandfather's command, Mercy's foot had never crossed his father's threshold.

And with this arrangement Miller Jed was content; for, with all his contempt of the Wards, and what he termed their bad management, he could not escape feeling a kind of respect for them; besides, if the boy was there, he would be out of mischief at home.

It was not often that the shrewd old miller had recourse to the law; but when Isaac was about fifteen years old, finding the validity of certain mortgages in his possession questioned, he placed the business in the hands of an attorney. The case was decided against him; and so exasperated was he by the loss, and the round fees demanded by his lawyer, that he swore henceforth he would have a lawyer of his own. He had one son, and he should be a lawyer. Like all people with only one idea in their heads, this became a mania with him. True, it would cost a sight of money to educate him, but then Isaac would get it all back. Lawyers could not only look sharp after their own property, but their very words were gold. Miller Jed retained a very vivid memory of the sum he had paid into the hands of Squire G——, and again and again he computed how many such sums he would receive in a year. The investment would bring a rare interest, he thought; therefore Isaac was sent away to school,

preparatory to entering on a course of law, under the tuition of the somewhat celebrated Judge G——, of L——.

It never occurred to him to consult the taste of his child in this choice of an occupation; but, happily, Isaac loved books better than anything else in the world, save Mercy, whose sweet face had grown to be a most rare book to him ever fresh and new; therefore he made no objection.

CHAPTER IV.

“ Let it be so. The barbarous Scythian,
Or he that makes his generation messes
To gorge his appetite, shall to my bosom
Be as well neighbored, pitied, and relieved,
As thou.”

Six years passed, eager, anxious, bustling years, with Miller Jed, during which he had, spider-like, put forth many a cunningly-laid thread around the feet of needy debtors, which would eventually draw them within his clutches; then, the simpletons! if they made any outcry, Isaac would be ready to deal with them. In company with such thoughts as these, the old miser's heart seemed growing hard as his nether millstone. With the family at the Hollow these years had gone by “as still as stars.” The tall figure of the old soldier was still unbent, though he leaned oftener than of yore on his silver-headed cane, the gift of a brother officer, as he passed along on his way to meeting on a sunny Sabbath. A few white hairs gleamed upon the widow's temples, while Mercy had shot up tall and graceful as a green willow.

They had counted time only by Isaac's vacations; for then the Hollow regained the old golden glow of sunshine, some of which, it seemed, he took with him at his departure. His vacations were mostly spent there, for his own home seemed cheerless and uncomfortable. Even Widow Barker's kind old wrinkled face failed to meet him at last, for her increas-

ing infirmities had compelled her to give up her trust, and her place was occupied by a stranger. Though his father felt a kind of pride in him, and did not fail to manifest toward him that kind of respect which ignorance not unfrequently pays to talent, especially talent which can command money, not a single day passed in which the son did not feel, with a trouble which made him sick at heart, the meanness and selfishness of his father's character. Every visit home deepened this feeling, and served to convince him that he never could consent to become the mean, pettifogging character for which his father designed him. Even the profession itself began to grow repulsive to him ; and, restless, dissatisfied and unhappy, he entered upon the last half-year of his term.

About this time commenced that seemingly new movement in the life of the churches of New England, known under the name of " Revivals of Religion." The movement soon reached L——, and Isaac and his fellow-students were numbered among the converts.

Then, how different seemed life, with all its aims and ends stretching into eternity ! If his father's life and opinions looked poor and contemptible to him before, what were they now, in the light of his newly-awakened feelings ? How willingly would he have laid down his life to have made his father conscious of their wickedness ! He felt that he *must* see it ; he could not fail to do so, God's law was so plain. He would strive with him as never yet child strove with a father, and then, casting aside all worldly ambition, joyfully go forth as a missionary, to speak the words of life unto the suffering millions of earth.

Thus, in words steeped in the glowing enthusiasm of his own heart, he wrote to his father and the family at the Hollow ; for, though the close of his term was near at hand, his ardor could brook no delay.

The Wards received the tidings with unfeigned pleasure. They felt that his talents were much better adapted to the

pulpit than the bar, and they rejoiced in the consciousness that their teachings and influence had not been in vain. It was not so with Miller Jed. Not until he had read the letter over three times, and carefully examined the handwriting, would he believe that he was not the object of some hoax. That Isaac should really think of opposing his will, he could not comprehend.

"Fool!" he muttered, contemptuously; "does he think I am going to throw away so much money on a poor canting priest? Ay, I see it all now," he continued, suddenly turning pale with rage; "this is old Ward's scheming. He thinks to marry his grandchild to this whining fool, and so regain his estate. I'll see the devil have them all first, the poverty-stricken old rascal! He called me cheat once; we'll see who will cheat or be cheated, now. I'll fix matters for them!" and shutting the water-gate with a violence that brought the great wheel to a sudden stand, and threw the glittering water in miniature cascades from every black rib of its skeleton frame, he settled his white hat more firmly on his powdered head, and sped, like a great gray moth, through the shadowy forest, toward Ward's Hollow.

Had the prince of darkness himself suddenly appeared on the threshold of that old farm-house, his appearance would hardly have been greeted with more surprise. The old soldier arose, as did also the mother and daughter, and stood silent from astonishment. But they did not wait long, for the old miller, without stopping for ceremony, began to pour forth such a torrent of anger, invective, and furious vituperation, as those old walls had never heard before. When he mentioned the name of Mercy, in connection with their designs on his son, the hitherto flushed cheek of the girl grew pale as death, and she clung to her mother for support. Not so with the old soldier; all the spirit of "seventy-six" seemed to swell in his veins, as with compressed lips he listened to the old miser's tirade. When the miller was fairly out of breath, he

drew up his tall, stately form to its full height, and said, in a voice which rung with the strength and clearness of youth :

"Are you mad, old man? I seek to wed one of *my* race with a Sewall! Do you know of whom you speak — or what you say? Begone!" he added, with a commanding gesture towards the door; "begone, I say, and pollute neither my house nor my sight any longer!"

There was something in the mien and tone of that old soldier, before which the brazen spirit of Miller Jed quailed. Thus it had ever been in all their intercourse; he could not help feeling it, and he hated him so much the more. He withdrew as suddenly and as silently as he had entered, and, until his dusty figure was quite hidden behind the hills, not a word was spoken by the inmates of the old farm-house. Then the old man said, thoughtfully :

"My children, Isaac Sewall must come here no more. I said no good would come out of it, at first; and it seems I was right. Pardon me, Jane," he continued; "I am over-hasty. Good has come of it. Isaac will be a better, wiser, truer man, for the teachings he has received from you, and God be praised that it is so! Still, we must make up our minds to see him no more. It will be a sad trial to him and to us, for somehow the boy has become very near to me; but better bear this, than the slightest suspicion of scheming for the end of which that old man spoke."

As usual, they questioned not his wisdom, nevertheless, the heart of Jane Ward yearned after the child of her adoption, and Mercy sorrowed deeply but silently, at the thought of meeting him no more. About a week after his father's visit to the Hollow, Isaac, with a heart teeming with hope and faith, came up the green lane, paused a few moments on the flat stone by the bars, where he had first met with Mercy, then passed on to his father's house. Miller Jed, save when under the influence of some ungovernable burst of anger, was a man of few words. He had decided to waste no breath

upon his son's whims, for he had one argument, of the potency of which he had not the slightest doubt. Therefore, he greeted him in his usual brief way, and listened in dogged silence while Isaac spoke humbly, but eloquently, of the change in his views, and of his hopes and wishes for the future ; and, at his usual early hour, retired to his bed without a word of comment. The young man found hope in his silence, and fervently thanked God for disposing his father's heart to listen favorably to his request.

The next morning, instead of going to the mill as usual, the old man was busy for some time in his own room. Presently he called for Isaac to join him, and, laying before him upon the table a great, black leathern pocket-book, stuffed to bursting with papers of all hues, bade him see whether his "school larnin'" could tell how much those papers were worth. The spider-like old miller seated himself at one end of the table, and kept his glittering eyes steadily on his prey, while Isaac, pencil in hand, examined the different notes and mortgages, and made an estimate of their amount.

"Nine thousand seven hundred and sixty dollars," he said at length, running his pencil again up the column of figures to see that they were correct.

"Right, nine thousand seven hundred and sixty dollars," repeated the old spider ; "and this year's interest will make it a trifle over ten thousand. A pretty nest-egg that, Isaac ! I wonder if any minister can show as good a one ?" he added, with a wily glance at his son, as with his crooked fingers he tenderly replaced the papers in the queer old receptacle.

"Perhaps not," was the reply ; "they are men who live with a higher aim than to lay up treasures on earth. Theirs is, I trust, in heaven."

"Ay, I, for one, am pretty sure it a'n't *here*," chuckled the old man ; "but come, boy, I want you to go up the hill with me."

Carefully placing the old pocket-book in the breast pocket of his coat, he led the way through the dewy fields in silence.

When they reached the highest point of the ridge that overlooked Ward's Hollow, for the first time the old man paused. It was a beautiful scene that lay before them. On the east stretched out the deep, green woods, along the further edge of which crept the winding mill-stream, until, meeting the resistance of the heavy dam, its waters recoiled upon themselves, and lay spread out in motionless silence, like a young heart when it first finds its love and trust dishonored. On the west lay the green Hollow, over whose rich midsummer beauty streamed those pensive gleams of golden light, the first faint prophecy of autumn. Isaac gazed abroad with a full heart. Like that heart, nature seemed overflowing with love. A benediction seemed to breathe forth from everything, and he blessed God for life — ay, even for breath. He thought of Mercy,—of his silent but ever deepening love for her,—of the time when he might fold her to his heart as the crown of all blessings; then a rude hand was laid upon his shoulder, and his father's shrill tones fell upon his ears.

"It is a goodly bit, boy. From the red hills yonder to the river, and from the road clean away up to Monroe's Notch, it is mine; secured by good warrantee deeds upon record. Ay, you may well stare," he continued, seeing Isaac's vacant look; "it's not many men that can show a farm like that, worth good five thousand dollars to-day, to say nothing of the mill, which brings in, on an average, two hundred a year more. It took a long head to get all this property, Isaac; it will take quite as long a one to *keep* it. I have spent e'en-a-most a thousand dollars — e'en-a-most a thousand — to teach you how to keep it, and to add now and then a penny to it; for who knows how much more I might have got, if I had only known enough about the points of the law? You *do* know enough, and it shall be yours; only, mark me, boy, I must have no more nonsense about priests; you must be a lawyer, — a rich lawyer, Isaac, and nothing else."

"I know how much you have done for me, father. Believe

me, I am not ungrateful; but do not drive me into a profession in which I know I shall never succeed. I don't care for money, only let me follow the way which my conscience and"—

"Don't care for money!" screamed the old miller, aghast. "Are you mad, or a fool, or both? How often have I told you that a man could succeed in anything, if he only had money enough?"

"Father! father!" exclaimed the young man, much agitated, "would that I could persuade you that there is something better, higher, worthier of a life's devotion, than money. It is God's love—his peace. Has not Christ himself said, 'What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?'"

"Don't talk to me about souls!" angrily exclaimed the father. "*These* I see and know," he continued, pointing over the rich fields he called his own; "and *these*," he added, striking his hand upon his breast, where lay the swollen pocket-book; "but of souls you nor I know nothing. And now," he went on, seeing Isaac about to speak, "I can't stand parleying here. Once for all, are you going to obey me? Will you be a lawyer, or not?"

The young man moved back and forth hurriedly for a few moments, then, with one glance at the lovely landscape and the blue heavens, he fronted his father, and said, sadly, but firmly:

"Had you left it to me, father, or even consulted me, I should never have chosen the profession of law. Not that it is not honorable and great—even sublime in its principles and aims; but our views of it are widely different. Were I to follow it, you would be sadly disappointed, for never would I consent to advocate a cause I knew to be wrong; never would I stoop to become the instrument of oppression and injustice. When I think how some of these very lands have been won, I cannot, *dare not*, obey you."

"Damnation!" exclaimed the father, trembling with disappointment and anger. "Then not a cent shall you have of mine, to save you from the poor-house. Go, and my curse go with you!" he added, as he sprang hastily down the hill-side.

Isaac sank down upon a shelving rock, and, covering his eyes with his hands, as if that beautiful scene had suddenly become painful to him, strove to collect his troubled thoughts. It was a fearful moment. All his past life, all his future hopes, seemed pressed into it, and he could only bow his head, and, in the anguish of his spirit, cry, "Our Father!" As if in answer to that prayer, a calmer mood came to bless him. He carefully scrutinized all the circumstances of his short life, and the motives that had led him to renounce a course which he felt could only be to him a death-in-life. Then came the memory of his old nurse's legends of the early martyrs, and his imagination kindled. "He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me," he murmured, as he arose and slowly took the way toward the old farm-house in the Hollow. Just as he entered a thicket of young birch, at the foot of the hill, he met a boy with a fishing-rod over his shoulder, who placed in his hands a letter, saying, old Captain Ward had given him some pennies to carry it to the mill. Isaac knew the old man's habits; something unusual must have occurred to rouse him to the effort of writing a letter, and, with a foreboding of sorrow, he broke the seal. It needed little skill to decipher those round, regular characters. There they stood, plain as the green earth beneath him, saying, in kind but firm words, that he must visit the Hollow no more.

"Cursed by him, and through him!" murmured the young man, as, in the utter loneliness of his heart, he sank upon the half-decayed trunk of a fallen tree. No one knows, no one ever can know, the sorrow, doubt, agony and despair, of the succeeding hours of that glorious mid-summer day.

CHAPTER V.

“ Eyes which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raised ;
And lips say, ‘ God be pitiful,’
Who ne’er said, ‘ God be praised.’ ”

One, two, three, four, five, six weeks — they occupy but a little space on our paper, yet they crawled over the Hollow like so many weary years. They brought sorrow and grief to the simple, affectionate hearts there, and, were we writing a mere love-story, we might tell how the heart of Mercy sank beneath the first taste of life’s bitter chalice.

Six weeks ! and how passed they at the mill ? We only know that the great mill-wheel dashed round and round as of yore, the waters moaned and sobbed, while Miller Jed continued to scrape up the soft meal with his bent fingers, as he occasionally said to himself, “ An obstinate dog ; but he ’ll come round yet. Poverty is a rare tamer.”

Then, a man on horseback paused in the whitened atmosphere at the mill door, and delivered him a letter.

“ I was going on to M——, and promised our minister that I would come this way and deliver that letter,” he said. “ It’s sorry news, I reckon, an’ you be his father ; ” and, with a whistle to his horse, he cantered across the bridge and up the hill.

Miller Jed started at his words, and stood for some time turning the letter over and over, as if he already apprehended its contents. Then, suddenly breaking the seal, he took them in at a glance.

“ Fever — come to him — die — death,” he murmured, as the paper shook in his trembling hands. “ He shall not die ! ” he exclaimed vehemently, as he hurriedly stopped the wheel. “ He cannot — so young, and ” — he started and looked over his shoulder in fear. A few drops of water had fallen on his hand, and he thought of the cold damp forehead of his dead wife, and that old terror seized him.

He hurried to his horse, and, with the meal still powdering his gray locks, like the ashes of repentance, mounted his sleek mare, and took the road towards L——.

Weary, faint, and almost despairing, Isaac Sewall had reached L——, he hardly knew how, and, presenting himself before Judge G—— and the old minister, stated all his troubles, and besought their advice. "I am homeless—an outcast; but I had rather die than become the mean, pettifogging character for which my father designs me," he said, sadly.

The old men were much impressed by his earnestness, and through their influence he was soon engaged as assistant in a large school in that vicinity; but he had hardly entered upon his new duties before he was seized with a raging fever.

When Miller Jed reached L——, the disease was near its crisis. All that night the miserable old man sat crouched in a dark corner of the room, scarcely daring to look upon the face of his child, listening to his ravings and low moans, with feelings too fearful for us to describe. Sometimes he was with his fellow-students, but oftener at the Hollow with Mercy; and, as if a gleam of the truth still reached his troubled brain, he would moan piteously, "O, take me home! Let me see her once more!"

It was never of his own home, but of the Hollow, that he spoke, and only once his fevered lips murmured the word "Father." The very tone was like a dagger to the old miller's heart. The next day the crisis was past, and the physicians spoke of hope, though the old man scarcely comprehended their words, but through the live-long day sat silent in the same place, casting fearful glances at the pale attenuated figure stretched on the bed, so like the one that had once lain stiff and stark in his own house. When Isaac was able to look up, his father's presence was made known to him, and a gleam of pleasure lit up his pale face, but few words passed between them, and neither referred to the past. As he began

to gain strength, one yearning desire took possession of his mind. "Only let me go home, and I shall be well," he pleaded, day after day, until the kind-hearted physician yielded a reluctant consent. An easy carriage was procured, and, bolstered up with beds and pillows, Isaac bade farewell to his friends, and, at a snail-like pace, set out for home.

"I much doubt the wisdom of this step," said the old minister as the carriage disappeared round the corner. "It is sixteen miles to B——, and the poor child is very weak."

"So do I," replied the physician, with a sigh, "yet it can make but a few weeks' difference, at the worst." Then seeing the minister's inquiring look, he added, pointing to a golden leaf that floated slowly toward the ground, "our young friend's fate is like that. No earthly skill can change it."

When the carriage reached the point where the green lane turned off to the Hollow, Isaac raised his eyes imploringly to his father's face, and made a faint gesture, as if he would go that way. Implicitly the old man obeyed, and, at a slow funereal-pace, they drove on to the old farm-house. The sight of the carriage brought the whole household to the door.

"*He would come*," said the old miller, as if in apology, as they gathered round the carriage.

"Yes, grandfather, mother, Mercy," said Isaac, faintly, as he stretched out towards them his thin hands, "*I would come*. You first taught me how to live—you must now teach me how to die. Forgive me, father," he added, laying his hand in the old miller's, "they can care for me better here than at home, and you will come to see me daily."

The old miller looked anxiously toward Adam Ward. "If," he murmured, hesitatingly, "money can repay you, take all I have, only let him stay—only save him."

"Gladly will we take him for his own sake," replied old Adam Ward, as he raised the poor invalid in his arms, and, assisted by Jane, bore him into the house.

Those pensive, golden gleams, the prophecy of autumn, that

slept upon the hills the last time that Isaac Sewall's feet had trodden them, had deepened into reality; and slowly, as the leaves changed from green to crimson, and, impelled by their own weight, floated toward earth, so waned the life of young Isaac Sewall toward the grave. Loving hands tended him, and loving hearts lavished their wealth of tenderness upon him, and he was serene and happy. He knew it was much better to die thus than to go through life cold, selfish and unloving. And he was happy in another thought; for all those sunny, autumn days his old father sat by his side, sometimes sobbing like a very child as he spake of death and heaven, listening humbly and earnestly to the sacred Word as it fell from the lips of Mercy, — words which he had heard a thousand times, but never *felt* before, — and joining with unfeigned humility in the petitions which Adam Ward raised daily to the Father of all. Yes, Isaac was happy. Only when his eye rested on the tear-dimmed face of Mercy, and his ear caught the sobs which she could not wholly repress, was his heart troubled. Then he would take her hand, and, drawing her cheek down to his, murmur:

“Yes, it was a sweet dream, beloved; but a little while, only a little while at the longest, and we shall meet again.”

In the mellow light of an October day they laid him in the village grave-yard, with very sorrowful but calm feelings. The perfect quiet of his last moments seemed to have descended on them, especially upon the old miller. Henceforth, to him, death had put off his terrors. The thought of his child seemed ever before him in the way of eternal life. With an eager hand he strove to repair the sorrow which his grasping selfishness had caused, and most gladly would he have deeded back to Adam Ward his ancient inheritance; but the independent spirit of the old soldier would not permit this. He declined, saying:

“Do what you please for my children; but, for me, I have about done with the cares of earth.”

Therefore, though no deeds witnessed the transfer of the estate back to the Wards, the wealth of the old miller flowed in many an open and secret channel around their lives; channels opened by death. And, for many years afterward, two old men might often be seen, seated like brothers near the open door of the old farm-house, while the golden sunlight rested like a glory from the celestial world on their hoary locks, speaking earnestly and hopefully of the life to come.

VII.

AN HOUR ON THE CROSSING POLE.

CHAPTER I.

"WHAT a pleasant old lady!" exclaimed Kate Lee, as we turned from the door of Mrs. S——. "How kind and agreeable she is, and her face is so calm and serene — so handsome! Surely, Miss R——, she must have escaped all the trials and sorrows which you wise people say are a part of life, though I am sure I do not see why it need be so."

"Look here, Kate," I returned, pausing, and placing my hand on the bole of one of the young shade-trees that lined the walk. "Is not this bark very smooth and fresh?"

"Why, yes, it feels like silk, while that above and below is dark and rough. Why is it so, Miss R——?"

"Two years ago, the bark was nearly stripped from the tree in this place; but you see it is quite healed over, so that none but a close observer would detect the place of the wound. It is so in life, Kate; a serene, calm look, like that of Grandmother S——, is often the badge of victory won over suffering and sorrow."

We walked on in silence until we reached a mossy pole, that spanned the noisy mountain brook which we must cross in our way home.

This pole, shaded by ancient button-woods, whose roots were half unearthed by the busy stream, was a favorite resting-place with me; and, as we seated ourselves, Ellen Ashton, our thoughtful young companion, spoke for the first time since we bade good-by to our venerable friend.

"Will you tell us more about Grandmother S——, as you all call her, Miss R——? Why, she is like the wounded tree; for, notwithstanding her face is so calm and serene, as Kate says, so like those faces I sometimes picture to myself among the clouds at sunset, and her ways are so cheerful and social, I cannot help thinking that she has been sad, very sad, some time in her life."

"Now, that is just like you, Ellen," began Kate, "always fancying romances, when I see nothing but very plain matter-of-fact people, who eat and drink, go to bed and get up, after the same old humdrum fashion. Not that I would apply that epithet to Grandmother S——, for there is nothing humdrum about her — nothing sad or gloomy — nothing" —

"O, no! I don't mean that she is gloomy," interrupted Ellen. "Indeed, it is difficult to express what I do mean," she continued, after a pause; "but it is a certain something in her eyes. I have seen the same look in sister Jane's eyes ever since her husband was lost at sea; especially when she stands, as she sometimes does, for a long time, gazing on his portrait. It seems to me as if Grandmother S—— sees portraits in the air, sometimes."

"Perhaps she does, Ellen," I began; but at that moment Kate, who was as thoughtless and as graceful as the stream at our feet, suddenly whisked a long branch of willow, which she had been idly floating in the water, over our heads, and, unmindful of the shower-bath she was giving us, exclaimed:

"Look, Ellen, look! What a funny old building! Why, the roof runs completely down to the ground behind! I wonder where the back-door was; and the chimney — see, it is large enough for a house of itself. What was it, Miss R——; a house, or a fort, or a jail?"

As both my young friends were natives of the city, and this was the first time they had ever got beyond the suburban villas which they call country, into a real agricultural district, I did not so much wonder at their curiosity concerning an

old-fashioned farm-house, then little better than a ruin, whose timbers had been laid nearly a century and a half before.

"It is, or rather was, a dwelling-house, Kate. Several generations lived and died beneath its roof; and not a few young maidens, fair and merry as yourself, have gone forth over that old threshold to gather the parti-colored sheaf of life in other and brighter fields. Of one of these I may some time have something to tell you."

"O, tell us now! Pray tell us now!" they cried in a breath.

Yielding to their request, I began: "Sixty-five years ago" —

"Mercy, what an age!" interrupted Kate, drawing a long breath. "Are you sure you are awake, Miss R——? Why, it troubles me to think of it."

"You will find that trouble diminish as the years go on, chatterbox," I replied, as I again took up my broken sentence.

"Sixty-five years ago, every room in that old house, even the great yard around it, was busy with the stir of life. Half a dozen or more negroes (for Connecticut had not then thrown off the curse of slavery), their black faces and white teeth glittering in the clear sunlight of a May morning, were passing from the stables to the street, leading horses, with saddles, side-saddles, and pillions, duly arranged; for that was not the day of wagons, though there were two or three clumsy-looking covered vehicles, called *chaises*, in those days, that not only attested the wealth and rank of their owners, but whose harnesses seemed a sore puzzle to the grinning blacks. At last, two fine-spirited animals were led out to the massive old horse-block, and held as quietly as possible by the attendants.

"They did not wait long, for soon, over that old threshold, came a young girl, leaning on the arm of a handsome, athletic-looking youth, on whose open, manly features sorrow seemed struggling with joy. After them came two gray-headed

couples, followed by a whole troop of relatives and friends, of all ages. The maiden's face was hidden by a veil; but, as she turned it aside to take one more look at the home of her childhood and the dear faces clustered round her, one could see that it was beautiful — fresh and beautiful as that bright May morning, and as dewy with tears — tears which again flowed rapidly, in spite of her efforts to suppress them, as, with her hand clasped close in that of her companion, she bowed her head to receive the parting blessing of their parents, and the last good-by of those who had been her friends from childhood.

“Then, her brother's stout arm encircled her, and, with one kiss on her cheek, he placed her in her saddle. Her companion sprang lightly into his, and, at a quick pace, without trusting themselves to look back, they crossed the same brawling brook, and took the road yonder, where it winds towards the west.

“The group remained in the yard, watching them until they saw them turn on the brow of the hill there, and wave a last farewell; then, the elder guests gathered round the parents, to speak a few words of cheer ere they departed for their homes. The younger ones grouped around the old porch, and discussed the wedding which took place the evening before; and the children ran in and out, with huge pieces of cake in their hands, supplied from the liberal store of black Time, the head female slave.

“It was agreed among the elder guests that James Sherman was an intelligent, steady, industrious fellow, who was sure of making his way in the world anywhere, especially in that western world for which he had just started with his young bride; and many were the flattering prophecies uttered with regard to his future success and position in that unsettled section, to all of which the bride's mother lent a willing ear, while her heart murmured, ‘Poor Mary!’ The younger ones were not the less unanimous in deciding that it was a capital

match — that they were the finest-looking couple they had seen for many a day — that the bride's dress was beautiful — that her gray-coating riding-dress and round beaver hat were very becoming and 'just the thing' for her journey; but, after all, it was a kind of wonder to them how Mary Burgiss could ever consent to go 'clear away off to the Whitestown country' (as they called the settlement of old Judge White, in central New York), to live among bears, and wolves, and those horrible Indians; and, as he listened to their words, and recalled some of the fearful tales of frontier life which he had heard, a dampness gathered upon the stout brother's eyelashes, and he, too, murmured, 'Poor Mary!'

"Then the guests mounted their horses, and turned chatting to their homes; and an hour later all was as quiet as usual in and around yon old farm-house."

CHAPTER II.

"In an open glade, formed partly by nature and partly by the woodman's axe, in the heart of the solemn old forest that, little more than a half-century ago, covered the rich swells and luxuriant vales of what is now Herkimer county, New York, stood a comfortable-looking log-house.

"All around, for miles and miles away, stretched that billowy sea of forest-leaves, and, save by a narrow foot-path that led from the cabin-door across the clearing, and was lost in the forest on the side towards the nearest settlement, the dwellers in that solitary place seemed to be entirely shut off from communication with the bustling, busy world.

"Everything about the clearing gave evidence of the thrift and activity of the owner, and rude and rough as was the exterior of the dwelling, indications were not wanting to show that the hand of taste had been busy there also. The great logs that formed the sides were half covered by the luxuriant branches of the wild, creeping roses, while around the win-

dow ar.d over the low door-way, the gay, flowering bean and the home-like morning-glory mingled their scarlet and purple blossoms; and in the carefully-weeded bed, beneath the eaves, were a tribe of hollyhocks, marigolds, four-o'clocks, bachelor's-buttons (you know I like the old-fashioned names, girls), pansies and pinks, mingled with rue, hyssop, worm-wood, sage and fennel — every leaf, every blossom of which was as dear as the face of a friend to the heart of her who tended them, because so full of sweet memories of that home where the seed from which they sprung had been ripened and gathered, far away amid the rock-bound vales of Connecticut. Such had been the aspect of the place through the long summer hours; but, at the time of which we wish to speak, the frosty breath of autumn had withered this wealth of greenery, and the long, brown trailers of the bean and morning-glory swung mournfully in the breeze.

“The glorious days of the Indian summer, during which the mighty forest had been as a sea of flame, almost too dazzling to behold, were already gone, and the cold, raw, whistling winds of November began to moan and whine around that lonely cabin.

“It was at the close of one of these leaden-hued days that a woman appeared in the door-way of the cottage, and gazed anxiously down the footpath where it disappeared in the forest. As a gust of wind lifted aside the checked apron which she had carelessly thrown over her head, it was easy to recognize the fine features of Mary Sherman. Her cheek was a shade or two browner, perhaps, than when she crossed yon old threshold a bride, but her slender, girlish figure had ripened into the luxuriant development of womanhood, and there was an abiding light in her dark eyes, so serene, deep and tender, that one felt at once that some new revelation of life's mysteries had been vouchsafed to her.

“More than once she appeared in the door, looking

anxiously into the dense forest, and at each time her brow wore a deeper shade of anxiety.

"Suddenly her practised eye caught sight of a well-known form hurrying along the narrow path, and, with a flush of joy on her cheek, and words of thanksgiving upon her lips, she sprang forward to meet her husband.

"'You have been frightened, Mary,' he said, in reply to her exclamation of delight, as he threw his arm over her shoulders, and gazed fondly down upon her upturned face.

"'No; at least not for myself, James, but for you,' she replied. 'You are later than usual — later than you promised, and you know there have been rumors of a party of hostile Indians being seen in the neighborhood.'

"'But they were twenty miles off, if, indeed, any were seen, which I much doubt. Ned Emmons is always seeing Indians behind every bush and stump. You would make a capital frontier-man's wife, Mary, if you could only forget other folks as readily as you do yourself. And now,' he continued, pausing and laying his hand upon her arm, as she was about to raise the wooden latch to their door, 'Whom do you think I have seen?'

"She looked up into his animated face for a moment, and, her own glowing with sudden hope, exclaimed:

"'Some one from home, is it not? Brother John has come!'

"'No;' and the glowing light began to pale as her husband went on. 'You will have to guess again, Mary; but I will not tease you. It is George Allen; and here, see what he has brought,' he added, as he drew from the deep pocket of his hunting-jacket a great, square letter, directed in the large, round characters which she recognized at once as her father's hand.

"'A letter! O, how glad I am!' she exclaimed. 'And it will be almost as good as seeing John to see George. Where is he? Why did he not come home with you?'

“‘He only arrived this noon, and his cousins would not hear of his coming with me to-night,’ replied the husband, as he opened the door and set the butt of his rifle rather heavily upon the floor.

“‘Hush!’ said Mary, softly, springing across the room, and laying her hand on a clumsy cradle, evidently the work of James’ jack-knife and saw, while she began to murmur over the nestling occupant some old New England strain. James Sherman moved stealthily to her side; and when, after a few moments, the eyes of the young parents met, as they lifted them from the face of their first-born child, it was very evident under what form that new revelation of life’s mysteries had been given them.

“As the twilight deepened into night, the wild winds woke in the forest and swept in fitful gusts across the clearing, driving before them occasional showers of sleet and rain, rattling against the cabin walls, and shaking the wooden fastenings with a violence that threatened their security. But James Sherman, confident in the strength of the good seasoned oak, only smiled as he saw his wife start at the clamor of the baffled winds, and drew his chair nearer to her side, while he continued to speak of the contents of the welcome letter, which they had read over and over again, and of his meeting with their old friend, until Mary almost forgot to rock the cradle at her side in the interest which the subject awakened.

“‘How good it does seem to get a letter from home!’ she said. ‘It is almost like seeing them every one. So Grandmother Fowler is gone at last—the kind, old soul. She spun this very yarn that I am knitting; and I remember, as well as if it had happened to-day, what she said when she gave it to me. “There, child,” she said, “I have spun a double portion for you, for you won’t have any old grandmother to spin for you out in the woods there; and mayhap she may not be here when you come back.”’

"After a moment's silence to the memory of her kind old relative, she went on:

"And Fred. Hoadley and Lucy Stone are married. Well, I should think it was time they were, if they ever intended to be. Why, he had waited on her a year or two before we came away. And to think that Hannah Meigs has got a baby! That beats all. Why, they have been married as much as ten years! But when is George coming here, James, and how long will he stay?"

"So the happy young wife ran on, and her husband replied:

"He will come here in the morning. Jim Lee is coming over with him, and he will stay around here about a week. He stopped two weeks at his sister's, on the way, and he says he must certainly reach home by Thanksgiving."

"And, if he does, our folks will get a letter from us just at the right time. They will all be at home — Thankful, and Sarah, and Eunice, and Eben, with their families. They will all be there, James — all but us;" and the tears sprang to her eyes, as she thought of the pleasant old festival, and the family gathering beneath her father's roof.

"Her husband drew her head to his shoulder, and, gazing thoughtfully into her eyes a moment, said:

"You were ever a home-bird, Mary, and I have sometimes thought, when I am all alone in the woods, that I did very wrong in bringing you so far away, to this lonely place."

"No, no, James; how could you ever think so? I have been so happy here!" she added, glancing at the fair, round face in the cradle. "I only thought, at that moment, how pleasant it would be to see them all once more — for you, and I, and baby, to step in upon them. Would n't they stare?" — she went on, smiling at the picture her words brought up; — "for you know that they don't know anything about baby yet; but I shall write all about her, and tell mother that we

are going to call her Clara, after her. You are sure George will come in the morning, James?’

“With her babe on her arm, and a smile on her lip, at the thought of meeting her old friend, Mary Sherman sought her bed, to dream, perchance, of yon pleasant old homestead.

“Some two hours later she was awakened by a yell that struck the terror of death to her heart. It was the terrific war-whoop of the savages. Her husband sprang to his feet, and, seizing his rifle, made for the door. The heavy wooden bars still resisted the pressure from without; but at that instant the blows of half a dozen hatchets fell upon the thick plank.

“‘The chest — quick — help me, Mary!’ he whispered; and, following his motions rather than his words, the terrified woman united her strength to his, which seemed at that instant almost superhuman, and they succeeded in moving the heavy wooden piece of furniture, which contained all their household valuables, against the door.

“Going to the back part of the house, where there was a narrow door, seldom used, and then completely hidden by the clinging roses, the husband bent his ear for a moment, and listened breathlessly.

“‘The devils are all in front, Mary,’ he whispered, going to the bed and pressing one kiss upon the soft cheek of his child, as he placed it in her arms. ‘Fly, dearest; this is your only hope! Quick! I will follow as soon as I have placed a few more things against the door. It may help to deceive them. For God’s sake, fly!’ he repeated in agony, as he unclasped her arm from his neck. ‘Take the path to the big oak in the east woods. I will be with you in a moment! O, God!’ he murmured, as she disappeared in the darkness; and the strong man reeled as he turned to his barricade.

“Drawing her scanty night clothing around her babe, to shield it from the bitter winds, Mary Sherman fled, like a

leaf before the gale, in the direction which her husband had indicated. In the edge of the wood stood the giant oak, and, crouching behind its great trunk, she awaited, in an agony that no words can describe, the coming of her husband. Unmindful of the cold, sleety rain, that drenched her thin garments, but pressing her babe more closely to her breast, she kept her eyes strained in the direction of her home, as if she would pierce the thick darkness that lay between them. Suddenly a ferocious yell rent the air, and the tall spiral flames shot up from the thatched roof of her home, casting a red glare over the clearing, and bringing into clear relief the dusky forms of the yelling savages. With a groan of agony, the wretched wife sank down at the foot of the friendly tree.

"From this state of happy insensibility she was at length roused by the wailings of her child. The poor little thing was almost dead from cold. Instinctively, she crept along a few yards, to where lay a great hollow log, which she had often noted in happier days. Creeping into this shelter, with her baby in her arms, she awaited, in fear and agony, the coming dawn.

"She almost shrieked in return, as she heard the yells of the departing Indians, as they plunged into the woods, and once she raised her child to flee, as a low growl from the other end of her strange shelter fell on her ear. But fear of the foe without gave her courage to remain and face that within, if need be; and when the gray light of dawn stole into her shelter, and she saw a monstrous bear rise from his bed in the opposite end of the log, and stalk slowly toward the forest, without even glancing at her, she drew her child closer to her breast, and thanked God that the brute had been more pitiful than man.

"When George Allen and his guide from the settlement reached the clearing of his old friends, the next morning, they found their comfortable cottage a smouldering heap of

ashes, and about a rod from that narrow back door lay the happy group of the evening before — the scalped and lifeless body of James Sherman, his insensible wife, and the little child moaning by their side.”

“Did n’t she die on the spot, Miss R——?” exclaimed Kate Lee. “Surely no woman could survive a night like that!”

“No, Katie; as is our day, so is our strength. Mary Sherman lived — lived to bring up her fatherless child — lives now to bless with her counsel her children in the third generation; and your young eyes have failed to perceive any traces of this ‘baptism of pain.’”

“Our eyes, Miss R——? Have we seen her?” both my young friends exclaimed at once.

“You have looked upon her face to-day, dear girls; for Mary Sherman is now Grandmother S——.”

VIII.

THE ALMSHOUSE BOY.

"**THERE** — take that — and that — and *that!*" and Mrs. Rhoda Tallman brought her hard hand against the ears of an eight-years-old urchin, with a force and dexterity that would have excited the admiration of any professed pugilist in Christendom.

The child was, evidently, used to it; he did not shrink or dodge, but stood and took the blows with an air of stubborn indifference. Retreating a step or two, she eyed him from head to foot, a moment, and again went on:

"Now, look at them 'ere trousers — all plastered over with mud! You 've been through every mud-puddle between here and the school-house! Shut up — not a word out of your mouth!" she continued, seeing him about to speak. "Who do you think is goin' to pay me for rubbing the skin off my hands every week, to keep you decent — to say nothing of wood and soap? Not the selectmen, I can tell you! It's little enough they are willin' to pay." Then, as if, to use one of her own expressions, "she didn't know how to keep her hands off from him," she strode forward, caught him by the collar of a poor, faded, forlorn-looking cotton jacket, and shook him, very much as we have seen a snarling cur shake a kitten that had presumed to cross his path.

"There, now go into the garden, and see if you can weed

out the beet beds; and let me catch you picking green currants, or getting down on your knees in the dirt, if you dare!"

The boy walked slowly away until he reached a corner of the building, when he paused, and pouted out his lips, and shook his clenched fists, in a way that indicated anything but submission and respect. It was well she did not turn back, as usual, to see that her orders were obeyed, but hastened into the house to join a gossip, whom she had very impolitely left alone while she performed this little scene.

After taking breath, and assuring her visitor that she might "thank her stars that she had n't any of the town poor to deal with, for a more provoking, shiftless, idle, lying set of folks never breathed the breath of life," she took up her work, and with it the topic of conversation which had been so suddenly interrupted by the vision of little Ned Norris' mud-bespattered trousers.

"As to the family in the other part of the house, as I said before, Mrs. Gadman, I know precious little about them, but that's quite enough. I wish they had kept where they belonged."

"Why, Mrs. Rhoda, I thought you would be pleased to have some one in the house with you. That part always looks so dark and *pokerish* that I'm almost afraid to pass it after dark."

Mrs. Gadman spoke mischievously, for she well knew that Mrs. Rhoda did not, as she often said, "fear the face of clay," besides, she knew, also, that her vixenish temper was the chief reason why the half of the house, belonging to a brother, remained unoccupied; those who had tried living there declaring that people might as well try to live in a hornet's nest as with such a woman.

"Yes, I dare say. There are some folks in the world who are allers *afeard* of their own shadow — can't be contented without they are surrounded by a whole tribe of people!" said the old dame, sharply. "But *I* like their room better

than their company. Thank the Lord, I a'n't *narvous*, and as to ghosts, I'd rather deal with all that ever walked than this woman's young ones. Look at that great grease-spot," she went on, pointing to a stain on her well-scoured floor. "They are all the time cantering through the space, and yesterday one of 'em took it into his head to come in here with a great slice of bread-and-butter in his hand, and drop it on my floor. Now, I may scour and scrub a month to get it out. But I'm not going to put up with their running in and out here, and so I told her, pretty plainly."

"What did she say?"

"O, butter would n't have melted in her mouth! — 'She was *so* sorry that *sonny* had made me any trouble; but he must be very careful, and promise good Mrs. Tallman not to do so again.' Faugh! I'd a *sonnied* him if he'd been my boy!"

"I dare say. But how does this woman live? They say she is very poor. Mrs. White says she never saw such a mean load of goods as they brought. Yet she looks respectable enough. I met her the other day, as I came out of Darling & Brown's."

"Yes, and she *feels* respectable enough, too, I can assure you. But, with all her managing, anybody can see that they are as poor as Job. She has nothing but what she earns with her needle; but, *la me!* she's as particular about what her young ones say and do as if she was the minister's wife. They must go to school every single day, to learn geography and grammar, and such like. I wonder if she expects it will get 'em a meal of victuals? The oldest boy is larnin' a trade in New Haven, and I really believe that she and the children would starve through the week rather than not have something good when he comes home of a Sunday. Then she makes such a fuss over him — tells him all her plans, and asks his advice, jest as if the opinion of a 'prentice boy was of any consequence! She may be a decent sort of a

woman enough for aught I know, but she ha'n't the least faculty to get along in the world or to govern her children. There's nothing like makin' children know their places, neighbor Gadman, and Widow Banks will find that out before many years, I guess. That oldest boy of hers rules the whole roost, now; it fairly makes me ache to see how she lets 'em go on; for, let my boys be what they may now, as long as they were under my thumb, they had to walk pretty straight. I've got one thing to comfort me — it can't be said I spoilt them by indulgence!"

"Certainly not," said the guest, as she rose to leave, anxious to discuss Widow Banks' "ways and means" at the next house; and "certainly not," we repeat, Mrs. Rhoda, for when wert thou ever liable to the "soft impeachment" of showing indulgence to aught beneath thy control?

Rigidly just, according to thy poor, meagre conceptions of justice, we grant thee; but *indulgent*! — why, the sharp, life-like tones of thy voice, the cold, steady gleam of thy light-blue eyes, thy sallow, diminutive, froze-and-thawed visage, would be sufficient vouchers of thy innocence, even if we were unable to point to the example of thy two strong-limbed, stout-hearted boys, who embraced the earliest opportunity to slip from beneath thy maternal thumb, and, true to their early habits, have continued to "walk straight" away, without pausing to cast one regretful glance on the home of their childhood, or wishing, even in dreams, to see again their mother's face; but, violent, selfish and unprincipled, one now hunts the cunning beaver along our western waters, a savage among savages, while the other makes one of the crowd that fill our prisons, the victim of his own unbridled passions.

Alas! for thee, Mrs. Rhoda Tallman! Alas! for all poor, stunted souls, who have learned to recognize no higher law than mere physical force — who still cling to the old code of *lex talionis*, as tenaciously as if they had had their birth on the plains of Syria, beneath the shadow of a Hebrew tent.

But, in justice to the old woman, we must say that, if she had seen three-score years without catching one strain of the angelic chorus of peace and good-will which, for eighteen centuries, has been filling our atmosphere and the heart of every reverent listener with hopes mightier than death and the grave, it was, in part, owing to other causes than wilful ignorance.

Born amidst the squalid misery of the drunkard's home, where the very atmosphere was heavy with strife and curses; alike the victim of a drunken father's rage and the ungovernable temper of her miserable, fretful, sorely-tried mother, she had grown up to maturity, with some dozen more young immortals, ignorant, selfish, and ungovernable. As she had advanced towards womanhood, several influences came in to soften, or, rather, conceal the sharp, disagreeable points in her character. At eighteen, she married Jo Tallman, an easy, good-tempered, indolent fellow, who, after one or two futile attempts to enforce his authority on a disputed point, found himself obliged to leave the field to his shrewish partner, and in a few weeks became as submissive as a lamb.

If cleanliness be next to godliness, as is asserted, then Mrs. Rhoda was certainly in a very enviable condition; for she possessed this virtue to an extreme degree. Even in her own squalid home she had been noticeable for her habits of cleanliness and industry, and, when she had a home of her own, they soon came to comprise, in her view, all religion and ethics; indeed, we much doubt if she would have been contented in heaven unless there were some floors there to scrub or some stains to scratch out.

Jo Tallman was a blacksmith by trade, and it cannot be denied that when he came in from the shop, his shoes left many unsightly traces on his wife's nicely-scoured floors, especially in damp, rainy weather, which were sure to call forth her sharpest words. This roused the malignant spirit of recrimination, which left foot-prints in their hearts far more unsightly

and difficult of erasure than those on the floor. The wordy conflict was unequal. Jo had no great development of the organ of language; besides, he was too easy to scold; so, by degrees, he found that he could enjoy himself far more to his mind in a corner of the village bar-room, than at his own fireside, thus leaving his two little boys wholly to the control of his stronger half. During their early years, by dint of scolding, threatening, and whipping, the mother managed to keep these boys remarkably ignorant of the mysteries of mud pastry, measuring the depth of brooks, climbing trees and fences, and all that department of science to which the mind of childhood "doth seriously incline." As they grew in years and stature, she by no means relaxed the pressure of her thumb, but, by equivocation, deception, and open falsehood, they often contrived to slip from beneath it, until in physical strength they became more than a match for her, and treated her commands with contempt and defiance. This state of things was not reached without many severe struggles on her part to retain her arbitrary control over them, and their home not unfrequently echoed furious words of anger and strife. They soon followed their father's example, and took refuge in the tavern. In time, the evil influence of the place began to show itself in the habits of both father and sons, and the demon of intemperance was added to domestic strife. But the wife and mother was the last to see it. She sat alone by her nice hearth diligently plying the needle, and comforting herself with the reflection that there is "no loss without some gain;" if they were away, she need n't burn so much wood, neither would they be littering the room up with whittlings and other rubbish; the tavern was the place for such things — a handful of dirt there, more or less, did not matter anyway.

Such was Rhoda Tallman in her youth, hard, querulous, and exacting; and she was in no wise changed for the better

when, husbandless and childless, she took little Ned Norris to live with her. Ned was one of

“—— Love’s outcasts on the earth ;
The child of love,—betraying and betrayed,—
The blossom opened in the Upas’ shade.”

So ran the rumor, for the mother, poor, young, friendless thing, refused to answer questions, and, a few hours after his birth, exchanged the bitter charities of the village almshouse for the grave.

When the child was about four years old, the town *magnates*, in their wisdom, decided that it would be less expensive to board out the few paupers dependent on them, than to support an almshouse. Accordingly, at the annual town-meeting, they were put up at auction, like any other town property, but with this radical difference, they were struck off to the *lowest* instead of the highest bidder. Thus it happened that little Ned Norris, after going the rounds of some half-dozen families that necessity or the desire for gain had induced to “bid him off” at the lowest living price per week, became, at last, an inmate of Mrs. Rhoda Tallman’s dwelling. He was a bright, quick-witted, impulsive boy, and, young as he was, did not fail to see, or rather feel, that the aim of each family was to make the most out of their bargain; and, as they were usually coarse people, with whom cuffs were more ready coin than caresses, the consequence was, that he became indifferent to shame and punishment, careless, idle, and stubborn.

But the angel of mercy never wholly abandons the heart of childhood, and sometimes a gift from a school-mate (the “selectmen” always stipulated with the people who kept him, for so many weeks’ schooling, or, at least, a pretence towards it), or a kind word from the teacher, would stir his better nature, and kept it from becoming entirely encrusted with evil.

Until the Widow Banks and her children came to reside in the house, Ned had never given much thought to his friendless, isolated position. Sometimes, indeed, on the "last day" of school, when the picture-books were distributed, and his schoolmates ran shouting home to display them to their mothers and sisters, he had slackened his pace, and wondered why he had no relations — wishing very much that he had a sister, or, at least, a cousin, to whom he could show his pictures.

But when George and Sarah Banks became his schoolmates, and he listened to their ceaseless quotations of "mamma," and references to "brother Fred.," this feeling became more distinct. Many times, as he bent over the garden beds after school, with his allotted task before him, his eyes would wander to the window where Mrs. Banks usually sat ceaselessly plying her needle on "band, gusset and seam," occasionally turning her head to reply to little Allan's "*bo-peep*," or listening with a pleasant smile to the bird-like chatter of George and Sarah. He could not help feeling the difference between their home and his; and he wondered if Mrs. Banks *never* scolded nor got angry like Mrs. Rhoda, and how it would seem to have such a home. His fingers would forget their mole-like task, and he would sit dreaming of these things until the sharp voice of his mistress roused all the old Adam in his nature, and he would pursue his work, muttering :

"If she wants weeds pulled any faster, she may pull them herself."

After turning to bestow on Mrs. Rhoda the grin of hate and defiance, on the occasion which we have described at the commencement of the story, he walked slowly into the garden, and began jerking up the weeds, with a strong wish in his heart that he could jerk Mrs. Rhoda in just the same way. He did not once look up to Mrs. Banks' window, nor heed the voices of her children, who were speaking very eagerly. They were speaking of him, and, presently, Mrs. Banks laid

down her work and came out into the garden ; but he was too angry — too intent on listening to the evil thoughts which filled him — to heed her step, until she laid her hand on his head, and said :

“ George tells me that you fell and hurt your ankle, while helping Sarah to escape from some unruly cattle, to-day.”

“ I could n't help it ! ” began the boy, in a tone of deprecation ; for Mrs. Rhoda was no believer in accidents, and he mistook Mrs. Banks' tone for one of censure. “ I stepped on a stone, and it rolled.”

“ Of course you could not ; no boy falls when he can help it,” she replied, rather amused at his manner. “ I did not intend to blame you for falling, but to thank you for your care of Sarah, and to see how badly you are hurt. Which foot is it ? ” she asked, bending down to examine it.

The child looked with a kind of bashful wonder into the widow's face, then down upon his little, bare, brown feet, and, hastily drawing back, he rinsed them in a shallow pool of water left by the recent shower, and held up the ankle for her examination, saying, in a tone of hesitation :

“ All the black won't come off, ma'am.”

“ Never mind, boy. It is somewhat swollen. Now put it down, and let me see you bear your weight upon it. Where does it hurt worst ? ” she added, pressing her fingers lightly on the swollen place.

The boy winced, and said : “ Please don't — don't turn it that way, ma'am ! ”

“ It is a bad sprain, and will make you lame for some days, I fear. If you will go into the house, I will bind it up for you.”

The boy hesitated. “ I am afraid Mrs. Rhoda will thrash me, if I do.”

“ Thrash you ? ” repeated the widow, in surprise.

“ Yes ; whip me if I don't get all the weeds pulled in these two beds, before sundown.”

"Did you tell Mrs. Tallman you had hurt your ankle?"

"No."

"But you should have told her when you first came home, and she would have bound it up nicely. Why did n't you tell her?" she asked rather curiously, as she marked his sudden change of expression.

"Because — because," he stammered, while his lip trembled at the memory of the blows that had scarcely ceased to tingle; "because she would not let me; and if I had, she'd only said, as she *allers* does, she was plaguy glad of it — it would learn me to stand up, next time. I won't stay here!" he continued, more vehemently, "I'll run away — I hate her — I wish she was dead!"

"Hush! hush! my boy," said Mrs. Banks, gently. "This is all wrong. You don't know what you are saying. You don't wish any such thing."

"Yes, I do, and I wish I was dead, too, for everybody thrashes me;" and the poor boy drew his ragged straw hat over his face, and burst into tears.

This time there was quite as much sorrow as anger in his tones, and the motherly heart of Mrs. Banks was touched by his friendless condition.

"Poor boy — poor little fellow!" she said as she gathered one of his little hands in hers; "have you no friends — no one to look after you?"

The boy shook his head and continued to sob.

"You must not feel so badly, Edward," she added, after a moment's silence. "I will be your friend, and I will ask Mrs. Tallman to let you come and see us often. We will all love you very much. Indeed, George and Sarah do already. Only think, if you had been dead to-day, who would have saved Sarah? You have no mother, they say," — she felt the boy's hand tremble in hers, — "but if you try to be a good boy I will be your mother, and George and Sarah and

little Allan shall be your brothers and sister. You will like that, I dare say."

"Yes, ma'am," whispered the subdued child, but with a look of wonder, as if he did not comprehend just how all this was to be brought about.

"I will go now, and talk with Mrs. Tallman about your ankle, and, if she will permit, I will send George to help you with your weeding."

Mrs. Rhoda had parted from Mrs. Gadman, and resumed her work when she saw Mrs. Banks approaching her door.

"What can she be after here?" she muttered. "To borrow something, I'll warrant. I've been expecting it ever since she came. But I'm not goin' to begin any such thing, and so I'll let her know in the first of it."

This amiable determination made itself felt in her fingers, which twitched the needle through the coarse cloth she was sewing with a more decided jerk than usual, and her whole attitude said, as plainly as words can say, "I neither borrow nor lend."

Mrs. Banks paused at the door, wiped her shoes with a degree of care which in any other mood would have won the old woman's admiration; but she did not look up until that lady said pleasantly, "Good-afternoon, Mrs. Tallman. I saw you at the window, and was tempted to come in and chat with you a while; but your floor is so white I am almost afraid to step on it."

This compliment acted as a slight solvent on the old woman's determination, and she condescended to look up and say, "Come in, ma'am. You need n't be afraid of stepping on my floor, for it is dirty enough, I am sure, though I washed it up this morning. But there's no use in a body's trying to keep decent in such weather, when it rains once in two hours, and with that good-for-nothing boy to run in and out, and make more tracks than a dog."

"But we housekeepers must confess that, if the frequent

showers do make bad work with our floors, they make the scene without very beautiful. I have been looking at your garden; it really does me good to see how bright and thrifty everything looks. I can almost see the plants grow."

"And the weeds too, I'll warrant; for that boy is the laziest of all mortals."

"Perhaps he would work better if he had some one with him. I find that children soon get tired of working alone."

"Somebody with him! Do you suppose I'm going out there to pull weeds, when I keep him for seventy-five cents a week, and don't make a cent at that, the Lord knows!" cried the old woman sharply.

"Certainly not," said the Widow Banks, with a significance she tried in vain to repress; "but my George is constantly teasing me for something to do. When I could afford to have a garden he used to help me a great deal. He will be very happy to assist Edward, if you will permit him, and, indeed, I shall take it as a great favor."

Mrs. Rhoda's first thought was to refuse, but a moment's reflection told her that four hands would be better than two, especially as she was very anxious to have the garden weeded; besides, they would be directly under her eye; therefore she consented.

Mrs. Banks then spoke of Ned's ankle, and the cause of the injury. The old lady hastily interrupted her:

"Fell down! I thought he had, by the look of his clothes when he came home. If he's hurt his foot, I'm glad of it. What business had he to go near the oxen? But I don't believe a word about it. He's allers makin' up some lie or other!"

"But his ankle is really badly sprained, Mrs. Tallman, and, as it was done in assisting my child, I think I ought to attend to it, though I know I shall not do it so skilfully as you would."

"Skilful or not," began Mrs. Rhoda, "I shan't find ban-

dages and liniment for every little scratch that *young one* gets. But you can do as you like. You can *afford* it I suppose ! ”

Mrs. Banks took no notice of the sneering emphasis which Mrs. Rhoda placed upon her last remark, but said mildly :

“ I trust I shall never be too poor to be grateful — especially to one who has, perhaps, saved the life of my child.”

“ Umph ! ” muttered the old dame, as the door closed on her visitor. “ I should think she ’d got young ones enough of her own to look after, without troubling herself with the town poor. But ’t would be just the same if she had a dozen. I knew she had n’t any *faculty*.”

George soon joined Ned in the garden ; and, though Mrs. Rhoda watched them sharply, she never caught them even once gathering the currants or otherwise neglecting their work. Therefore, when George came in after tea, and asked if Ned might go home with him and have his ankle bound up, she said, “ Do go along and done with it ! ”

The ankle was duly cared for ; and then there never was, in Ned’s opinion, such curiosities as the children displayed to his admiring gaze. There was little Allan’s new alphabet, gayly printed on Bristol-board which “ brother Fred.” had brought him from the city ; there was, also, Allan’s file of tin soldiers, a sadly mutilated set, some wanting an arm and some a head, but all the more natural, as George observed, for it proved they had seen actual service. Then, there was George and Sarah’s box of books — a wonderful box, to say nothing of its contents, with Doctor Franklin pasted on the centre of the lid, flanked on either side by run-away apprentices, stray horses, dogs, cows, ships, steamboats, hats and muffs ; while directly above his head ran a locomotive with a whole train of cars. Ah ! it was a wonderful box — quite a picture-gallery in itself — and it seemed as if Ned would never tire of looking at it and asking questions. They had scarcely come to the books when Mrs. Banks reminded them that Mrs.

Tallman had not given Ned permission to stay, and might be displeased if he did not return. The children were very anxious to have him stay just to see *one* more, and Ned looked very wistfully at a red-and-blue Robinson Crusoe which sat holding the gentle *lama* by the halter, in the book that George had just opened; but when Mrs. Banks repeated her remark, saying, if he went now, Mrs. Tallman would be more willing, perhaps, to let him come again, he turned away resolutely, saying, "Please, ma'am, won't you ask her?"

"I will," and the kind widow kept her word. Mrs. Rhoda consented, though in no very gracious manner, muttering, "If he was there, he would be out of her way."

So little Ned became a frequent visitor at Mrs. Banks' apartments. As his bashfulness wore off, she found that he was coarse and rude in his language and manners, — how should he be otherwise? — and very ignorant.

She did not reject him, however, as a bad boy who would contaminate her own children, but her kind heart yearned over him, and she strove, by kind and gentle teachings, to lead him to "overcome evil with good." It was long before she could perceive any radical change in those respects, yet her "faith was large in time," and she did not despair.

She was right. In her room he caught glimpses of childhood's fairy land, from which he had been excluded from his birth. He was not ungrateful, and gradually her smile of approval or glance of reproof came to have more influence over him than all the cuffs he had received from his birth, and these had been neither few nor far between. He certainly was a better boy, or Mrs. Rhoda a better woman; for, though she continued to raise her hand in the old scientific manner, the blows were much less frequent and heavy. Possibly a breath of the atmosphere of quiet happiness that pervaded Widow Banks' rooms had stolen through the key-hole (Mrs. Rhoda usually kept the doors locked to keep out the children), and somewhat softened the acerbity of her disposi-

tion ; or, perhaps, the change might be traced to the many daily little attentions and deeds of kindness which Mrs. Banks persisted in showing her, notwithstanding the indifferent and often coarse manner in which they were received.

But to whatever influence we ascribe it, it is very certain that she one day called all the children to her door and divided between them some fine large apples, and not only gave Mrs. Banks permission to fasten her clothes-line to a post on her portion of the yard,—a favor which she had peremptorily refused when she first came there,—but even accepted an invitation to take tea from that lady. Unfortunately, this visit did not terminate as happily as Mrs. Banks hoped, for the old lady did not fail to criticize the management of her children, and enlarge on her own superior method.

“My boys were never allowed to litter up a room like that,” she exclaimed, pointing to a corner where George was engaged in manufacturing a chair for Sarah’s doll, while she and Allan watched the progress with delight. “If they wanted to whittle, there was room enough out of doors, and that was the place for them.”

“Yes, I highly approve of out-of-door exercise for both boys and girls,” said Mrs. Banks, innocently ; “but I find, if we leave children *too* much to themselves, they are liable to get into mischief, — contract evil habits, and”—

“Do you mean to twit me to my face?” cried the old woman, angrily. “I guess my boys were no worse than some others, and *some* folks that I know may live to see *theirs* hung yet!” and, jerking her head up and down like a beetle against a wall, she marched out of the room, banging the door behind her.

For several weeks after this visit, she met all Mrs. Banks’ attempts at conciliation with a frostiness that would have chilled a less hopeful nature ; but gentleness and patience, combined with faith and love, can do much even in our world

of discord; and, in time, they did not fail to soften the anger of Mrs. Rhoda.

To the surprise of the whole neighborhood, Mrs. Banks continued to reside in the house until her lease expired; then, in hope of obtaining better employment and being nearer her son Fred., she removed to New Haven.

It was a sad day for Ned Norris when the Banks family left M——; how sad none but those whose childhood has been lone and friendless as his can tell, and God grant they may be few! He had earnestly promised the good widow to remember her teachings, and to try to be a good boy; but, as he stood on the steps, watching the slow progress of the wagon that bore his friends and their few household chattels away, the prospect of ever being able to fulfil that promise seemed to grow more and more hopeless; and when it turned the corner into the great stage-road, and George waved his hat for the last time, he burst into tears.

To the honor of Mrs. Rhoda's nature be it recorded that she did not box his ears, or make any demonstration towards it, but contented herself with saying:

"Well, well, boy, there's no use in crying. George could not stay here forever. You'll find enough to cry for, before you die, without crying after him, — though I must say," she added to a neighbor who had run in to see them start, "that he is one of the best-behaved boys I ever saw; and the wonder is how he comes to be so, for his mother has n't got the least faculty for managing children."

"I never thought she had much faculty for anything; if she had, she kept it to herself, for she was n't a bit sociable," replied the woman. "She was always kinder queer."

"Queer or not," said the old woman, rather testily, "she had as few bad streaks as anybody I know, and everybody has some."

Ay, and everybody has some "good streaks," friend Rhoda; but thine, which had been drawn out and made faintly luxi-

nous by the sun of Love, soon began to fade in its absence, and, in a few weeks, became dim and dingy as before. Little Ned felt the change, and, between the bitter temper of the old lady and the influence of his old habits, became discouraged and discontented, and almost ceased to *wish* to be a good boy.

But he did not forget his friends; and when Dick Mills, the stage-coach driver, occasionally brought him some such trifling presents from the Banks family as their limited means enabled them to procure, he longed for something to send in return—some little thing to prove that he was not forgetful or ungrateful. But all his little keepsakes had been their gifts, and if he sometimes received a penny or two for some slight service rendered a neighbor, they were always taken into the close keeping of his old mistress.

One summer day, he was at his old work in the garden, when there came a thought to him which brightened his face at once. There was the raspberry-bush in the corner of the garden; *his* bush,—for even Mrs. Rhoda called it his,—with its fine, large, delicious fruit just beginning to ripen. “They’ll be almost as big as acorn-cups,” he said, eying them with delight, “and I’ll send them. I don’t believe they’ll get any in New Haven half as nice.”

But the next thing was a basket to put them in. He would not ask Mrs. Rhoda for one, because he feared being forbidden to think of such nonsense. After several futile attempts to construct one from some old splinters he found in the garret, he gave it up, and decided to ask his friend, Dick Mills, to lend him one. It so happened, that the day previous to the one on which Dick had promised to take charge of his berries, Mrs. Rhoda had occasion to be absent from home. She set some cold food on the table for his dinner, and, after laying out work enough to keep him busy through the day, left him alone.

Ned worked very industriously until he began to grow

hungry, and cast frequent glances toward the noon-mark on the kitchen window-sill. At length the lazy shadow crept quite up to the notch, and he was proceeding to the house to get his dinner, when he observed a forlorn-looking Indian woman coming down the street with several baskets dangling from her arm. Seeing him look at her very earnestly, she came up to the gate, and asked him to buy one. There was one just the size he wanted. Ah, how he longed to possess it! The splinters were so smooth and white, the red and yellow stains upon it so gay and bright. He did not heed the woman's jargon, but stood turning round and round, with a very wistful look, until her "You'll take it, my little man, — it's only a sixpence!" aroused him, and he put it back, with a sigh, saying, "No, no, I can't."

"If your mother would just give me a bit of dinner for it," suggested the woman.

Mother! Ned sighed again; but, suddenly remembering his own dinner, he asked her to wait a moment, and, running into the house, he brought out the bread and meat that Mrs. Rhoda had left for him, and asked if that would answer.

"Yes, my man, though cheap as dirt at that," she replied, as she took the food, and placed the basket in his hand.

Ned hid his prize in the thick currant-bushes, and returned to his work in high spirits, and with such a good will that even Mrs. Rhoda, on her return, condescended to say that he had done quite as much as she expected.

After supper he gathered his berries, and covered them with a nice piece of white paper, which George Banks had given him. He was stealing past the door, when his old mistress saw him, and called him back. "Her great handkerchief, her great red cotton handkerchief," was missing, and he was required to give an account of it. He disclaimed all knowledge of it; but a glimpse of the basket, which he in vain tried to hide behind him, aroused her suspicions at once.

"Whose basket is that? Where did you get it, and what

have you got in it, you little scamp?" she cried, angrily, as she snatched it from his hand.

"It is n't there. I haven't got it nor seen it," cried the boy, earnestly, as she tore off his paper cover.

"What's all this? Where did you get the basket of berries, and what are you going to do with them?" she repeated.

The boy was obliged to repeat the story of his purchase of the basket, but as soon as he mentioned the Indian woman, her anger burst forth with tenfold fury. Regardless of his repeated declarations that the woman did not enter the gate, and that he had not seen the missing article, she insisted that the squaw had stolen it, or that he had given it to her in exchange for the basket.

Again the blows fell thick about his ears, and in a manner that proved that her right hand had by no means "forgotten its cunning." "There! into the house with you, you little lying, thieving rascal!" she exclaimed, driving him before her to the door.

The color mounted to the boy's cheek as he paused, and, facing her, said firmly, "I am no liar. Will you give me my basket?"

"*Your* basket!" she replied, mimicking him. "I should like to know by what means it became *yours*. I guess you'll learn not to peddle off my things again to a drunken squaw — thief!"

The boy cast on her a fierce look of hatred and defiance as she placed the basket in the cupboard, and ordered him to bed. He went to his garret, swelling with rage and disappointment. "She shan't have it!" he muttered, as he sat down on his bed, with clenched fists. "I hate her worse than ever. I'll steal it and run away. I'll go this very night!"

Mrs. Rhoda's bedroom door stood open, but Ned's bare feet gave no sound, as he stole across the floor to the cup-

board, and seized upon his basket ; neither did the slight rattling of the kitchen latch, as it yielded to his pressure, disturb her slumbers.

The next moment he stood beneath the quiet stars, as friendless as on the day of his mother's death. But he was too young to reflect ; besides, he was very, very angry ; and he walked down the street with a firm step and tearless eyes, until he reached the stables of the village inn. There were watchful eyes not easily cheated, and out sprang old Lion, Dick Mills' great dog, with a low growl ; but, instantly recognizing him, he sprang upon him, wagging his tail, thrusting his nose up to his face, and manifesting his delight by quick, short barks.

The boy's whispered " Get out ! Get down, Lion ! " only made him redouble his gambols ; and, fearing to wake some one in the house, if he spoke louder, he permitted the dog to go on, until he reached the outskirts of the village.

Noble old Lion ! He had an older claim on the boy's heart than even the Banks family. After they moved away, he was the only thing the child had to love, or that returned his love. Ned felt this, and there was a choking sensation in his throat as he pushed his old friend down, and strove to speak sternly to him, and drive him back. Perhaps Lion was conscious of this struggle, for he did not obey, but, springing in advance a few rods, lay down directly in his path, and, laying his head between his outstretched paws, looked up in his face with such wistful, beseeching expression, that the poor boy sat down by the road-side, and burst into tears. At length he brushed them away from his cheek, and, patting the old dog's head, said :

" No, no, old Lion, you mustn't go. They would say I *stole* you, too, I suppose. Go home ! Go back, sir ! " he continued, sternly. The dog retreated a step or two, and stood eying him with the same wistful look. Ned caught up a stone, and, turning away his head, hurled it at him. The

dog gave a low hoarse growl, and turned towards home. The boy went his way, but, in spite of his efforts to restrain them, the tears rolled slowly down his cheeks, and he often turned as if he expected — nay, hoped — to see old Lion at his heels. At sunrise he was crossing the long bridge on the eastern side of the city. His heart sank within him at the sight of so many houses glittering and gleaming beneath the morning sunlight, for how should he ever find the one inhabited by Mrs. Banks? Then he began to ask himself what that good woman would say. She might blame him, and, perhaps, send him back. He grew irresolute. Once or twice he ventured to ask some boys, whom he met, to tell him where Mrs. Banks lived; but a quizzical reply, or a shout of laughter, was all he received. Weary, hungry and discouraged, he wandered along Water-street, until he found himself in the vicinity of Long Wharf, where he sat down on a pile of lumber, and watched, with a listless gaze, the movements on board of a brig which was fitting out for sea. The scene soon became a very busy one. Drays and carts began to rumble along the street; then came gentlemen on foot and in carriages, whose very canes had a business-like look, and, finally, a large drove of mules which, amidst kickings and snortings and no very gentle coaxings from the sailors, were transferred to the brig's deck. The boy became interested, and drew nearer and nearer, until he sat down on a box, close to the vessel's side. Two portly-looking gentlemen stood there talking with a powerful, athletic man, with a profusion of dark crispy hair, slightly sprinkled with gray, and an open, good-humored face, barring a slight irritable expression of impatience. They were about to leave the spot, when the latter turned, as if to give some further orders to the man on board the brig, and his eye fell on the child.

“Up with you, my lad!” he cried, hastily. “That box should have gone on board before. Halloo, there!” he added, motioning to one of the men. “Take that box on board, and

see that it is carefully stowed." He was turning away, when, struck by the boy's eager, earnest look, he said, impatiently, "Well, out with it, my lad. What do you want?"

"To go to sea, sir," replied Ned, instinctively.

"To go to sea!" replied the captain, — for it was none other, — gazing at him from head to foot, with a quizzical look. "What berth do you expect to fill? Do you know a marling-spike from a rope's end?"

"No; but I can learn, sir."

"True enough, and in more ways than one, too. What do you expect?"

The boy looked up inquiringly.

"I mean what do you expect me to pay for your valuable services?"

"What you please, sir."

"Come, Bingham," said one of the gentlemen, who had stood, during this conversation, impatiently tapping his boot with his gold-headed cane; "you have shipped one boy, and that is enough."

"But the rascal has sent word he can't go, and, as you insist on my taking out these passengers, I must have some one to wait on them besides old Joe. I will overtake you in a few moments."

He then turned to Ned, and, by a few well-directed queries, drew from him his whole story.

"The old sea-cow!" he muttered, as Ned related the cause of his running away. "Well, you got your basket; I'm glad of that. You are good grit. You shall go with me. I'll feed and clothe you, and give you a trifle beside, and, what's more," he continued, smiling, "a good whipping now and then, just to remind you of that old alligator."

"I'm use to that!" cried the boy, catching the quick, cheerful tone of the skipper.

The captain called to a negro, who answered to the name of "Cook," and gave the boy into his care for the day. The

next day at twelve o'clock, the brig "Swan" was off Montauk Point, bound for Berbice. But as we are neither a mermaid nor a Mother Carey's chicken, we will not attempt to follow them, but go back to the village, and listen a moment to the conversation between two of the "selectmen" who stand talking at the corner of the green. Mrs. Rhoda has duly notified them of Ned's elopement, and their faces wear such a serene, self-satisfied look, that we scarcely need to hear Esq. G——'s closing remark, "There is no need of making a fuss about it; it will be quite a saving to the town," to convince us that they are very public-spirited men, and have a very distinct idea of the difference between dollars and souls.

Twelve years have passed — years in which that rare *daguerrean*, Time, has added many a scene to the gallery of memory, sketched amidst sin and suffering, perchance, but they all look beautiful in this shaded light. One sketch more, and we have done.

It is, in the phrase of the old German *minne-singers*, the "sweet spring-time," and our quiet town of M—— lies bathed in the fresh, dewy beauty of a new creation. Its aspect is little changed, for twelve years effect much less change in such a place than twelve weeks in a crowded city; for time is far more lenient than a board of aldermen, or the incendiary. Moss has accumulated on the northern roofs of some of the old houses; blinds have been added to some; on others the unpainted clapboards have taken a deeper brown; but few save such retrospective souls as thou and I, reader, would note the change. Therefore, we need no guide to Mrs. Rhoda's dwelling, nor introduction to the dame herself, who, in her clean cap and checked linen apron, stands in the door-way looking down the street; for whatever mad freaks time may have played with our ringlets and roses, he

has left her unscathed; indeed, at this distance, she even looks renovated.

She is watching for some one, I'll wager; and here comes the stage-coach, dashing past the tavern, regardless of the yells of a young dog, the successor of old Lion, who has long since gone the way of all dogs, and draws up at Mrs. Rhoda's door. Down springs Dick Mills, whose short, stout figure and rubicund phiz defy time and weather, and lets down the steps. A handsome, manly-looking fellow, in a blue round-about jacket and a Panama hat, steps out and returns the old woman's greeting.

"Ned Norris!" We did not need her exclamation to tell us that, for the eyes and hair are the same, though those heavy whiskers are a foreign growth, and his cheek, between wind and weather, has deepened to an oriental hue. He turns to the carriage, and pretty Sarah Banks, who has been his wife for more than a twelve-month, carefully places a bundle in his arms. What can it be? Some rare eggs, perhaps, or a new set of choice crockery for Mrs. Rhoda's table; something, at least, which he is very anxious to show her, for, awkwardly enough, he begins to undo the fastenings, while the old dame scolds, and Sarah, springing to the ground, says, as she takes it from him, "Do wait, dear Ned, until we get into the house!"

In a few moments they are seated, and the skilful hands of Sarah remove the soft wrappers, and out looks a baby—a beautiful, blue-eyed baby, fresh and fair as an angel. O, what a baby that is! "Neighbors, have you such an one?" How the father's eyes glisten with pride and joy as the old woman praises its beauty and points out its resemblance to its mother! How she trots it and croons over it, while Ned and Sarah draw from the big basket (not Ned's little one) the few trifles they have brought for her! *Trifles!* there is tea and sugar enough to last a reasonable woman six months, to

say nothing of a nice new cap from Mrs. Banks, and an apron from Fred.'s wife.

Ah ! Mrs. Rhoda has found her heart. See how her old eyes fill with tears while she protests that Ned is " kinder to her than her own son could be, and that she has not the heart to take a single thing now he has a family of his own to support. It's robbing the baby ; God bless it ! "

" Never mind the baby, Aunt Rhoda," replies Ned, laughing. " I can manage to fill his mouth and a dozen more, if need be, for to-morrow morning I sail master of the ' Orion,' if wind and tide are fair ; so give the baby to me, mother, and get us a good dinner, for we must go back in the return stage."

The seed sown by the good Mrs. Banks in the heart of that friendless boy did not fall on stony ground, but, under the kind and somewhat whimsical nurture of Captain Bingham, throve and brought forth fruit, not unmixed with weeds, of course ; but these are fast disappearing under the gentle influence of Sarah.

Captain Bingham never deserted him ; beneath his eye he became a thorough seaman, and was gradually advanced until he gained the command of a fine new brig. For some years he had supplied many of Mrs. Rhoda's wants, and though he wholly refused to take her into his family to live, as Sarah once suggested, he continues to provide for her, and has never permitted the recently-awakened warmth in her old heart to grow cold from neglect. Her Siberian visage will relax and become almost tropical when she speaks of him to her neighbors, and she is often heard to remark, " Boys will be boys, and there a'n't no use in trying to make 'em walk a crack."

Wise people will tell you, dear reader, that the age of miracles is past. But believe it not — O, believe it not ! — for faith, and hope, and love, are still on earth, and the great God still in heaven !

IX.

MELINDA DUTTON.

"It is a kind offer enough, Melinda; but why not stay here and learn a trade?"

"Because I hate sewing, and have no idea of being scolded by some fretful old seamstress or milliner. Out there I can at least do as I please."

"Perhaps so; but I shall be much surprised if you are content to stay there six weeks, though I have no wish to discourage you."

"Content!" cried the laughing girl; "that would, indeed, be something new for me. But tell me something about these old relatives; you have been there, you say. They are rich, certainly."

"Yes; I went there once with your mother. It's quite out of the world, among the woods and rocks. The place gave me a notion of the world before the flood; and Aunt Eunice is nothing at all like your grandmother. I doubt if her ideas ever wander beyond the limits of her farm. Your mother, I remember, happened to tear her dress in passing through one of their clumsy gates," continued the lady, laughing. "It was a silk, and you should have heard Aunt Eunice's lecture on the extravagance and degeneracy of the times that permitted a woman to wear a silk dress anywhere save to church. However, your mother listened with meekness, and was well repaid, for the old woman loaded us down with good things when we came home. She is kind, I think.

though certainly queer. But they *are* rich, and can't live forever."

The above is but a fragment of the conversation that took place between Mrs. Murdock, of Middletown, and her young friend, Melinda Dutton. Melinda was an orphan, the pet of a doting grandmother, who had done all she could towards spoiling her. She was ignorant, untrained and conceited,—not that she had lacked facilities for education, for her grandmother had sent her to the most fashionable schools in the city, and she had, as the old lady proudly observed, "been through all the branches;" yet of all that was useful and necessary for one in her condition of life she was wholly ignorant. Nature had given her a quick, bright intellect, and a loving heart, yet, at sixteen, she was indolent, ignorant, self-willed and discontented.

Melinda's mother had died soon after her birth, and her father had spent most of his time at the south. His business was lucrative, yet his habits were such that at his death there was nothing left for his child. The grandmother did not long survive him, and left the girl not only portionless, but nearly friendless. In a remote corner of our town the old lady had a brother and sister still living. They were unmarried, and, when informed of her death, wrote to offer a home to her orphan grandchild. It was this letter that gave rise to the above conversation.

Mrs. Murdock has given her impression of Aunt Eunice; now, dear reader, let me give you mine. She was not, indeed, anything like Melinda's grandmother, but a shrewd, strong-minded, energetic woman, who knew little and cared less about that portion of the world which could not be seen from the old farm-house door, where she had always dwelt with her brother Jonas. Her prepossessions and prejudices were very strong, and not easily changed, for she was seldom contradicted,—none of the neighbors caring to "get into a snarl" with Aunt Eunice. Her tongue was swift and sharp,

her manners somewhat rough ; but she had a true, kind heart, though the way to reach it often seemed somewhat intricate. She had about her that kind of rude dignity and that marked individuality which are peculiar to people who, as one of our hard-fisted neighbors expresses it, "never look up to nobody but themselves ;" and, for all such as allowed themselves to feel or manifest any craving to be "fashionable and genteel," she felt a heartier contempt than a Turk feels for a Christian.

Personally, she was fine-looking, tall and erect, with eyes of that deep, brilliant blue whose intensity often surpasses those of a darker shade, and high but well-cut features, indicative of great firmness and decision of character. At three-score not a single line of silver thriddled the mass of dark-brown hair which seldom suffered the confinement of cap or bonnet, and her skirts were of the narrowest fashion, and her short-gowns of the most antique pattern possible, made up from her stores of home-made flannel, or, in summer, of gay chintz which she had purchased years ago. A flannel blanket in winter, and one of Uncle Jonas' cast-off straw hats in summer, answered for head-gear ; and in this guise she appeared in the great yard back of the house, at sunrise every morning, with her milking-pails on her arm and a great bowl of corn-meal in her hand, followed by a motley group of hens, ducks, geese and turkeys, gobbling, crowing, cackling and screaming, while her own sharp voice was heard above the din, lecturing some belligerent old turkey-cock or gormandizing gander, or in softer tones commending some motherly old hen ; for, like most childless women, she had contracted the habit of talking to everything, animate and inanimate, as if it were human. Her house was scrupulously neat, but she was too much of an utilitarian to cover her floor with a carpet—"plaguy dirty things, good for nothing but the moths ;" neither had she sofas, lounges or ottomans, but her parlor was furnished with great arm-chairs, and these were piled full of

woollen blankets with all sorts of striped borders, and coverlets of all imaginable patterns.

On the cherry bureau, and in the corners of the room, were divers rolls of homespun cloth, linen, and woollen, and *linsey-woolsey*, shining cam-colored flannel for her own use, and butternut-colored "dress cloth" for Uncle Jonas' wear. Aunt Eunice did not like black, it "was such a rotten color."

The old-fashioned round table was guiltless of lamps or books, or engravings, but, at the proper season, was covered with great pewter platters, full of sliced apples, or peaches, or berries, drying for winter use. The walls were garnished with sundry bunches of yarn, and from a projecting beam hung the old people's Sunday suit.

The sitting-room or, as they called it, the "out-room," was scarcely less bountifully furnished. Here were, usually, baskets of apples standing about, and, across the hearth in summer, stood Aunt Eunice's great wheel, while close at hand, on the red chest, lay several bunches of wool-rolls ready for spinning at moments of leisure from the kitchen. But Aunt Eunice's peculiar province was the kitchen; here her glory was reflected in the bright tins which lined the shelves, the pails and noggins, the quantities of dried beef, and strings of apples, pumpkins, red pepper and herbs, that dangled from the beams overhead. The great wooden screen before the fire was hung with clean linen bags, and, perchance, a shirt or pair of trousers of Uncle Jonas'; and, in each corner of the yawning fire-place, stood the dye-pot and salt-mortar — those *lares* of our fathers' hearth-stones, quite as useful and quite as venerable as those of Rome or Pompeii — certainly quite as venerable, for, who, I ask, ever saw a *new* salt-mortar?

Here, Aunt Eunice had spent sixty years, busy, independent, contented, and happy — happy, except at two or three periods, when she had been troubled with the suspicion that Uncle Jonas thought of getting married. And she was

respected and beloved too ; for the sharp words and stinging proverbs which she bestowed upon her neighbors were pretty sure to be followed by kind deeds.

But I must not forget Uncle Jonas. Dear, kind, sunny-hearted, Uncle Jonas ! with his benevolent smile, his quiet, thoughtful manner, and his few, yet pleasant, words. He was the patriarch of the neighborhood, whose footsteps were hallowed by angels in the shape of little children, who gathered around and looked upon him with love and reverence.

Of course, Melinda Dutton was very poorly qualified to appreciate or enjoy her new home. Mrs. Murdock's words were not without their influence, and they constantly recurred to her mind, after she was seated in the stage-coach that was to convey her to Maplehurst ; and, by the time that vehicle stopped at the rustic tavern where she was to get down, she had come to seriously regard her old relatives with excessive repugnance, and to pity herself as the most unfortunate and wretched of mortals.

"Have you brought my niece, Mr. Green ?" asked a full-toned, pleasant voice, as the driver opened the coach-door. It was Uncle Jonas that spoke, and who went forward and carefully assisted her to alight. His words were so kind and cheerful, his manner so cordial, as he led her into the house, and asked about her journey, that the girl's brow grew clearer, and she watched his movements, as he transferred her baggage to his square farm-wagon, with unexpected interest.

The Dudley farm was about three miles from the village. They were soon on the road, and, as they passed along, Uncle Jonas pointed out the old farm-houses, and told her the names of the owners. The sun set soon after they left the village ; the twilight deepened, and as the road crept carefully and cautiously on among the hills, and grew more and more rugged, the old man relapsed into silence. The moon arose ; gradually the dark shadows fled, and the dewy forest-leaves quivered and glittered like glad *living* spirits, as the soft

moonbeams slid down among them in search of the sweet, fragrant flowers. It was a new scene to Melinda. There was that in her nature that answered to it, and she uttered a low exclamation of delight.

"Ay, yes, the heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people see his glory!" said the old man, in a deep, low tone, involuntarily slackening his horse's pace, and raising his eyes reverently to the heavens above them. •

They turned into a dark, narrow lane, overhung by the luxuriant branches of the cherry-trees that shaded it, and, soon afterwards, the horse stopped, and Uncle Jonas, pointing to the dim outline of the old farm-house, shut in by trees, told her that was her home. He had scarcely ceased to speak when Aunt Eunice appeared, coming from the house with a tall candle in her hand, which she was trying to screen from the current of air, alternately addressing that and the old house-dog, who was manifesting his delight at his master's return, by barking and gamboling directly in her path.

"Get out of the way, you black scamp! Be still, I say. There, *sweet* out, will ye, — plague on the pesky thing! I wish I'd got the lantern. Jonas! I say, Jonas, is that you? And have you got Lindy?"

"Yes, here she is, Eunice, — you can't mistake that face!" he said, leading the girl forward; "she's a Dudley, every inch of her."

"So much the better!" cried the old woman, shaking her heartily by the hand, and raising her light to get a better view of her face. "You're the last of a good stock, for Jonas never will get married now, and I'm proper glad you've come to live with us. But come in, child; you are tired and hungry as a bear, I dare say."

Melinda followed her into the house, and was soon seated at a table loaded with eatables, but arranged in a manner that greatly disturbed all her ideas of propriety. There was a great platter of cold beef, flanked by plates of butter, smoked

beef, pickles, cakes and pies. On opposite corners of the table the old lady had placed a loaf of bread, and almost a whole cheese. Between the old people stood a pitcher of cider, which they drank alternately with their tea.

"Cut for yourself, Lindy!" said the old lady, handing over the loaf and a sharp knife. The girl hesitated, and she continued: "I s'pose you are used to having a whole plateful cut up every time you eat, just as Thankful Stone did here, last winter, when I sprained my ankle. But I put a stop to it pretty quick. What was left was all dried up, and Miss Thankful did not like dry bread nor odds and ends any better than other folks, and I was n't going to stand dog for the whole family. It's rank waste to cut up bread in that fashion!"

After being pressed to take this and that, and "jest a crumb more" of something else, Melinda withdrew from the table, and surveyed the kitchen with visible astonishment. All was strange, and Aunt Eunice, rattling away her dishes, asking her questions about her journey, lecturing the dog, or inquiring about some sick person, or society matters, of Uncle Jonas, strangest of all.

The next morning Melinda rose at a late hour, and made her way to the kitchen.

"Good morning, Lindy! You look chirk as a cricket!" was the old lady's greeting. "Come, get your breakfast," she continued, taking a covered dish from the hearth. "Jonas and I eat two hours ago, but we thought we'd let you sleep, seeing you had come so far yesterday."

"Breakfast!" echoed Melinda, with a glance at the old clock. "Why, it is but eight o'clock now, and we never have breakfast until that time, in town!"

"Then you are a pesky lazy set! I should faint clear away before that time. Why could n't you get it before?"

"Because we never got up; or grandmother used to get

up, to be sure, but she never called me until it was ready, and that was at eight."

"Well, then, she did not do her duty by you," said the old woman, bluntly. "I guess you'll have to turn over a new leaf here. 'Airly to bed and airly to rise' is our creed."

The girl ate her food in silence, then loitered to the window and looked out. After a while, she said, "What a lonesome, dreary, out-of-the-way place this is, aunt! I wonder how any one in his senses could think of building a house here!"

"Your great-great-grandfather, Ambrose Dudley, settled here before the old war, and if he was n't as wise as any of your city folks, I should like to know it. He was a justice and a deacon. Besides, when folks have enough to do, they ar'n't apt to find fault with such an old homestead as this," replied the old lady, dryly. "But, come, child, if you've nothing else to do, wash up the breakfast dishes, and let me see how smart you can be; but, lawful sakes!" she added, glancing at Melinda's light muslin, "you don't expect to wash dishes in that gown, I hope. It's as bad as white, and flimsy as a cobweb."

"It is one of my usual summer dresses, aunt. As to housework — I never washed a dish in my life!"

"Well, now, if that don't beat the Dutch! E'n-a-most seventeen, and never washed a dish!"

"Housework is for servants. No lady does housework — it is n't genteel!"

"*Genteel!* a poor, good-for-nothing set of critters they must be, running in debt and cheating other folks out of their honest dues, jest as Tim. Hatton did. He married a fine lady, and set up for a marchant, and cut a mighty dash for a while, and then run out of the little end of the horn. Some folks got plaguily bit by him. Lord save us from all such critters!"

"But, aunt, you are rich enough to live without work. Why don't you hire servants?"

"Child!"—and the old lady was quite erect, while she flourished the bunch of scouring-grass which she held in her hand, with double vigor,— "from Ambrose Dudley down, your forefathers have been prudent, pains-taking, industrious people. They never grudged a poor man a meal of victuals or a load of wood; but they were saving, and thought it no disgrace to work. My father was well to do in the world; when he died we all shared alike. Your grandma married and set up for a fine lady, and spent all her part years before she died. Jonas and I have held our own, and added something to it, mayhap. I don't want to boast; but let me tell you, child, we ar'n't going to *squander* what we have. Why should I keep servants? I have to slave hard enough now, and I don't want a pack of servants to manage. I wouldn't take all the southern negroes as a gift."

"O, I would! There ought to be slaves everywhere to do the drudgery. But I suppose it is of no consequence how people live in such a place as this. In the city you would *have* to live like other people."

"*Have* to! I'd like to see them that would make *me* have to be such a lazy, good-for-nothing critter. I'd like to know, Lindy, if the folks in Middletown are all monkeys, that they must ape one another? They read their Bibles, I suppose, and don't they know that He who made all things provided two hands for every mouth, and that he that won't work sha'n't eat? Learn to help yourself child, and always remember that the highest price you can pay for a favor is to ask for it."

Melinda soon found that it would not be so easy to have "her own way out there" as she fancied. Aunt Eunice, regarding all her previous habits and opinions with inexpressible contempt, was determined to make her a thorough house-keeper, and she was a much more formidable character than the girl had fancied; but, with all her zeal, Aunt Eunice was,

s yet, not quite wise or gentle enough to undertake to remodel her niece's character with any great hope of success.

Melinda set about her tasks with considerable zeal, influenced as much by the novelty of the thing as a desire to make herself useful. But her ignorance, her carelessness, and, above all, her endless inquisitiveness, hourly exhausted her aunt's small stock of patience. Besides, Aunt Eunice had a way of her own for doing things, and would tolerate no innovations, and Melinda soon developed a strong passion for experimenting. If she moulded the bread, it was sure to be after some new method of her own; or, if her aunt charged her to stir the cream "round with the sun," she would invariably stir it the other way, to contradict, by experiment, her aunt's theory.

"I tell you, Lindy, you'll bewitch that cream. It'll never come until doomsday if you stir it that way. It must go round with the sun!"

"The sun does n't go round, aunt. It's the earth that moves; it's more philosophical to stir it in this way."

"Fiddlesticks-ophical! Are you blind or turning fool, to say the sun don't go round? Why, look yonder. A little while ago you might have reached it with a pole, e'enamost, from the top of High hill. Now it has got clean away up in the sky,—and don't it go down every night behind Joe Page's woods?"

"So it seems, aunt. But every child knows that the sun's motion is only apparent; it seems to rise and set because the earth revolves on its own axis every day, something in this way;" and Melinda caught up a ball of yarn, and began twirling it round, in illustration of her theory.

"Dear me, there goes my nice yarn into the cream! What awful fools there are in this world! Do you s'pose that I've lived sixty years in this world and stood on my head half the time without knowing it? It stands to reason there is no such thing. What in the name of wonder would come of us

all if the world did turn over? Every dish on my shelves there would be smashed into inch pieces!"

"Why, aunt, I supposed no one doubted the fact. As to standing on your head and breaking your dishes, all that can be philosophically"—

"Lindy, Lindy Dutton, I care nothing about your philosophy! What I *do* know I know for *sartin*. If you had studied your Bible more, you wouldn't be so ignorant. Didn't Joshua command the sun to stand still? and would he have done that if it had not been a moving? I guess Joshua, the son of Nun, knew as much as *some* folks now-a-days!"

"But, aunt"—

"Silence! Don't let me hear any more such heathenish notions! I wonder how sister Rachel could let any one put such dreadful things into a child's head. It beats all!"

Melinda had too much of her aunt's spirit to have her grandmother censured without an attempt at vindication. But this course only made the old lady more caustic and peremptory. They did not take kindly to each other. Melinda had a quick and loving appreciation of beauty,—Aunt Eunice saw nature only in a potato patch or field of turnips. In her view everything was useless that did not directly minister to physical needs or fill a purse. As to spiritual needs, she did not recognize any as legitimate save such as could be amply satisfied by reciting the catechism and listening to two sermons on the Sabbath. Therefore she forbade all the girl's attempts to adorn the ample door-yard with shrubbery, and made endless war on all such things as "briars and weeds stuck into pots to clutter up the house;" saying she felt it her "bounden duty to break her of such shiftless habits."

With Uncle Jonas the girl was on better terms. To him her young face was like a sunbeam in the wide old house. He really *liked* her; and though he was not blind to her faults, he always had some word in palliation. He was one

of those kind souls who find it difficult to frown, or believe aught but good of their fellow-beings. Melinda became unconsciously attached to him. He would have made it all sunshine in the house; but though, in reply to his sister's daily catalogue of the girl's faults and misdemeanors, he spoke many calm, wise words, the clouds would stay.

The old lady had limited her niece's society to a few families for whom she had a particular regard. But the girl soon grew weary of these — pronouncing the girls “animated churns,” and the young men more stupid than their oxen. Not far from the Dudley farm, though on a more frequented road, lived Mr. Hatton, the father of Tim Hatton, the bankrupt, whom Aunt Eunice denounced daily with inexhaustible bitterness. It was shrewdly suspected that the great leathern pocket-book in which she kept her deposits was *minus* several hundreds through Tim's failure. However this might be, there was no reason to doubt her sincerity when she declared that she “e'enamost hated the whole *bilin'* on 'em !”

Melinda occasionally saw the Hatton girls at meeting. Their dress and manners indicated pretensions to fashion quite above those of the families she was accustomed to visit, and she wished to make their acquaintance, partly because she expected to find more in common with them than with the others, and partly from a strong desire to contradict Aunt Eunice, and have her own way. Accident favored her; they met at the village store, whither she sometimes accompanied Uncle Jonas. The young clerk introduced them, and, in a few moments, they had commenced an ardent intimacy. They were pleased with her, and she readily promised to call on them to meet their brother's wife, who was a Middletown woman, and knew several of Melinda's friends.

She had called on the Hattons several times before Aunt Eunice was aware of it; then followed a scene of bitter reproaches and galling hints of dependence on one side, and

wilful, unflinching obstinacy on the other. Henceforth Melinda threw aside all seeming restraint or respect for her aunt's commands, and even Uncle Jonas began to view her character with serious apprehensions. Had Aunt Eunice been guided by a more intelligent appreciation of the girl's mind, or more largely furnished with the wisdom of winning souls, it might have been otherwise. But she was not conscious of her own shortcomings, of course, and laid all the blame on her niece, whom, she said, "a bad bringing-up had completely spoiled." So, when winter came with its lonely sights and sounds, Melinda grew more and more unhappy and dissatisfied, and longed to get away.

One evening, as she sat moodily watching the patches of snow as they slid from the boughs of a hemlock tree near the window, she was startled by the unusual sound of sleigh-bells in the lane. Presently a sleigh paused before the door, and a gentleman sprang out, whom she at once recognized as a Mr. Langley whom she had known in Middletown. He was, at present, clerk in a large wholesale store in New York. He was spending a few days with some friends in the village, and, hearing that Melinda was in the place, had called to see her. She was delighted with this mark of attention; he was handsome, fashionable, agreeable, and conversant with all the details of that life for which she so ardently pined. He called frequently during his stay in M——, took her to ride, or whiled away the hours by her side, and soon read in her manner that tale which no man ever reads with indifference. At first this knowledge awoke no feeling but gratified vanity. But soon other feelings began to unite with this, and, guided by motives which he did not stop to analyze, he continued the intimacy, until her whole soul was bound up in him. His visits were very disagreeable to Aunt Eunice, who, partly from instinct and partly from prejudice, disliked him. But she did not remonstrate wisely, nor even show any of that maternal wisdom that is so well versed in the mysteries of

womanhood. Melinda refused to give up Langley, and began to meet him by stealth.

“Full oft they met, as dawn and twilight meet
In northern climes ; she full of growing day,
As he of darkness,”—

until — but why need I say what followed ? It was the old story — old as passion and time. From the fresh, up-gushing fountain of her heart there arose a mist of golden splendor, through which she failed to see the heartlessness and selfishness of him in whom she trusted. She loved, was deceived, led astray and destroyed ; but no, not entirely, not forever destroyed.

It was only when she found herself deserted, miserable, suffering, destitute, and an outcast in a distant city, that the delusion utterly vanished. Then she saw that the halo of light in which her eyes had been dazzled was but a reflection from her own passionate nature, and in her misery and utter self-abasement she longed to die. Then it was, with the blush of shame on her cheek and its keener burnings in her heart, that she began to feel that her old relatives, in spite of their peculiarities, had been her only true friends.

Never had the old farm-house known such a commotion beneath its roof as on the morning succeeding Melinda's flight. At first the old people could not believe her gone ; and, when they could no longer doubt it, they were filled with anxiety, dismay and grief. Aunt Eunice spoke her indignation, weeping the while with heartfelt sorrow ; and Uncle Jonas, with great misgivings, endeavored to hope that all might yet be well.

More than a year passed, and nothing was heard from Melinda beyond a few vague rumors. Everything at the old house had settled into its habitual gait, when one evening, as Uncle Jonas seated himself by the candle-stand, he said :

“Eunice, hand me my spectacles ; Joe Page's boy has

brought me a letter from the store. From Esq. Gleason, I s'pose, — something about the deeds for the grist-mill."

She took the letter up while he arranged his glasses, but laid it down with a contemptuous —

"I wonder if he calls that thing a J? I vum, I can do better myself! Squire Page's writing was as plain as print. But now-a-days, when folks pretend to know everything, their larnin' is like Cinda Jones' flannel, all thrums. Now I think on 't, Jonas, I want you to get me some walnut bark in the morning. I want to color my blanket yarn."

He was too much absorbed in his letter to heed her remarks. She caught a word or two occasionally, as he read on, pronouncing each word in an audible whisper, as was his habit. At length, she interrupted him :

"What's that, Jonas? Who's destitute? What the *posset* ails you, man? John Doolittle has n't failed, has he?"

"No, no," he said, in very tremulous tones. "It's about Lindy, — poor child!"

"Lindy! you don't say, Lindy! What of her? Where is she? — is that letter from her?"

"Read it," he replied.

"What, I read such writing as that! I can't make head nor tail to it. It's worse than goose-tracks. Read it yourself, Jonas."

He read the letter aloud. It was written, without Melinda's knowledge, by a person who had known her in Middletown, and was well acquainted with her subsequent history. It gave a touching account of her present condition, and pleaded earnestly with Uncle Jonas to go to her, forgive her, and take her back. Uncle Jonas' voice grew husky, and it was not without considerable swallowing and clearing of his throat, that he read the note to the end. In Aunt Eunice's heart the fountain of pride was still quite as deep as the fountain of pity, and she exclaimed :

"There, Jonas, it has turned out just exactly as I always said it would. The minute I set my eyes on that feller, Langley, I knew he was a good-for-nothing scamp, and I told Lindy so over and over again; but I might as well have talked to the east wind. She has made her own bed, and now she must lie on it. She has found out now, I guess, who knows best!"

The old man sat in deep thought, slowly folding the letter and saying to himself:

"Poor child!—her mother died when she was such a little girl. I'm afraid we were too hard with her. She was not used to our ways,—and, then, she was so good sometimes. Poor dear, what will become of her?" He seemed weighing some great question; at length he arose, and both his looks and words evinced that the decision was made.

"Eunice," he said, "you may put me up a mouthful of something to eat, and get my tother clothes ready, for it's a considerable of a long way to New York, and I shall want to start pretty early. I'll just step over to neighbor Page's and get Joe to come over and look after the cattle and do chores while I am gone."

"Why, Jonas Dudley! you don't mean to go to New York! How are you to find the way? You'll get lost, and robbed, and murdered! And what can we do with Lindy, here? How can she ever look anybody in the face again?"

"We'll treat her kindly, Eunice, and do our duty by her, as I'm afraid we did not when she was here. And if she is a good girl and behaves herself now, I tell you, she sha'n't be put upon by anybody. She's got sadly out of the way, and, mayhaps, we have our share of blame for it. Think of the poor, young thing dying among strangers! and remember our blessed Saviour had words of peace and forgiveness for those worse than she."

Aunt Eunice was softened. "Sure enough; I wonder how I could forget *His* example, a minute. But it cut me to the

heart to have Lindy turn out so dreadfully. May-be I was testy, too, and did n't have as much patience as I ought; but you shall bring her home, Jonas, and I don't care if folks talk till their tongues blister."

She was thoroughly roused by Melinda's need of pity, and, long after Uncle Jonas was asleep, she was still up, busily engaged in making preparations for his journey — preparations that would have sufficed for a journey to Oregon.

It is well to listen to the voice of sorrow. Aunt Eunice had an intense family pride, and an intense scorn for all such erring ones as Melinda, and she felt these things as women frequently feel them; but now, attacked as she was from a new quarter, they were completely broken down and discomfited.

She went about her household affairs, reflecting upon the influences under which Melinda had grown from a child, and with a growing feeling of self-accusation as to the circumstances under which she went astray, until there was born in her heart a larger sympathy. New light and warmth gushed in; and the "winged seed dropped down from paradise," which had lain so long smothered, started into sudden and rapid growth, rooting out many of the strong, rank weeds.

When the day fixed for their arrival came, she was restlessly busy in perfecting the minutest preparation for the invalid. Once or twice, when everything seemed in readiness, she drew out her wheel and tried to spin. But the flax would slip from the distaff, and the thread catch in the fliers, until, half angry with herself, she put it away, and piled up nearly half a load of wood in the capacious chimney corners.

At last, while she was yet in the chamber doing something to add to her arrangements, the joyful bark of the old dog announced their approach. She hastened down, and met Jonas as he entered the house, bearing his shrinking, sobbing niece in his arms, as he would have borne a little child.

"Heaven be praised, Jonas, you've got back alive and brought our child with you!" she cried. "I've had the fidgets about you, Lindy;—child, don't cry so! I'm proper glad to see you; I never was so glad to see any one in my life!" she added, as Melinda hid her face in her cloak, and sobbed still more bitterly. "Let me take off your cloak, child."

"Glad to see *me*, aunt!" said the poor girl, attempting to look up. "Can you, indeed, forgive me?—forgive all the sorrow and distress I have caused you? O, you are too good!"

"No, not good;—the Lord knoweth, not good. I've been to blame. If I had been a true mother to you, I don't believe you would have gone astray. But I'll do better, now; and you'll do better, and may the Lord forgive us all! But, that Langley—I shall hate him as long as I live and breathe!"

Aunt Eunice proceeded to untie the girl's hood, and Melinda's tears fell fast on her hands, as she said:

"Heaven bless you, aunt! I had not dared to hope for this!"

"It has blessed me already, child, in showing me my errors and bringing you back to us. I should have remembered that you had neither father nor mother. But I'll try to be a mother to you now, Lindy." Aunt Eunice's tears came fast, and she drew down her glasses and said to Uncle Jonas, "Do open that entry door, Jonas. It smokes here enough to put one's eyes out. It's that pesky back-stick; I knew it would smoke when I put it on."

Many weeks passed before Melinda was able to leave her room. Had there been no change in Aunt Eunice's manner, there would have been a total change in her sense of it; for, in her experience of suffering, she had learned wisdom. But Aunt Eunice *was* changed; she strove hard to overcome her fretfulness and be considerate and kind. Melinda had pre-

pared herself for the severest reproaches, and this unusual tenderness, that avoided even the mention of her error and disgrace, was, as she said, "too much." Poor girl! she felt these words and looks to be the good angels that were

" ————— To breathe away
The dust o' the heart with holy air."

She came forth to the world a new creature. Her saddened woman's nature, whose crown had fallen, made itself a beautiful wreath of the flowers of faith, humility and patience, which suffering had caused to spring along her path. Serene and strong in her love for all that was good and beautiful, she became to her old relatives a ministering angel, and watched and tended their old age with unwearied love and care. And even Aunt Eunice came to see how divine it is to have compassion on the sinning, — to save the soul that is ready to perish.

It may not be amiss to add, that on the death of her old relatives, when their great estate became hers, Henry Langley again appeared, and sought to make her his wife. But, to his surprise and confusion, he did not find the thoughtless girl that his arts had seduced, and was refused with that lofty scorn which every such villain deserves. Firmly and patiently she walked the ways of life, doing all things nobly, because she communed with the Spirit, and believed in Him whom to know "is life eternal."

X.

THE MAIDEN OF THE FOUNTAIN.

"THERE — there — she has gone — vanished ! O, Annie ! how could you waken me ?" exclaimed Richard Fanshaw, as he buried his elbow in the rich moss on which he lay, and, half raising himself, gazed with a look of reproach and disappointment on the laughing face of a fair girl of some fifteen summers, who, in the very spirit of mischief, stood dipping a graceful wand of young birch in the limpid waters of the spring at her feet, preparatory to giving him a second sprinkling.

"Wake you, Richard !" she replied, with a musical laugh ; "why, your eyes were wide open — as wide as Mr. Chip's yonder," she continued, casting a whole shower of bright drops at a squirrel, that peered at them with his round, bright eyes, from a hole in the trunk of an old hickory, a few paces distant.

"I tell you, I was fast asleep," said the young man, or rather boy, for he could scarcely have seen twenty years, in a tone of petulant impatience ; "and your ill-timed mischief has destroyed the most beautiful dream that ever blessed the heart of man."

The young girl drew near him, and, laying her small hand on his shoulder, looked into his disturbed face, until the expression of mirthfulness that a moment before had dimpled over her own, gave place to one of wondering sadness.

"You are angry with me, Richard," she said, "angry with your own little Annie."

For a second, Richard Fanshaw returned her earnest glance; then a smile broke round his mouth, and stole upward to his eyes, chasing away every trace of his petulant mood.

"No, no, Annie, I am not angry—only sorry that you awoke me so soon. I was wrong to speak so hastily; but sit down here, you little mischief!" he continued playfully, drawing her down by his side, "and I will tell you my dream. There, sit where"—

He paused, and looked at her with an air of bewildered surprise.

"What is the matter, now, Richard? Are you going to sleep again, or do you expect to put me to sleep?" asked the girl, archly.

"Hush!—sit still, Annie. Do not stir," he replied, in almost a whisper. "There—now the resemblance is wonderful. I could almost think it was she."

"She!—who?" said Annie, starting up and looking round as if she expected to see a third person peeping from behind some one of the forest-trees.

"The Maiden of the Fountain, child. There was something in your face, just then, when the slant sunbeams from between the branches of yon old maple fell on your head, that reminded me strongly of her. There, now, those mischievous dimples have spoiled it all. But sit down and watch the bright water while I tell you all about it.

"I had traced the 'branch' from the 'notch' down to the mill-dam, Annie, in search of trout, and, tired of my unsuccessful morning's sport (if sport it can be called), I struck across the woods for home. I reached the spring, and, after slaking my thirst, lay down under the old birch, and watched the sunbeams that came prying through every nook and crevice in the thick green leaves, peering up the ravine yonder, as if haunted by a sense of something far more beautiful

than they had yet discovered, — just like me, Annie, — and the beautiful, and, in many cases, grotesque grouping of the old trees yonder, with their deep, motionless shadows changed to delicate mosaic by the restless fingers of the saucy sunbeams. Then I mused on those beautiful fables of ancient Greece, of which I told you the other day; of that simple faith that peopled forest and stream with living spirits, thus recognizing its own intimate relations with Nature, until my vivid fancy re-created that time in all its freshness, and peopled this spring and woods with the shapes of many a ‘fallen old divinity.’ I fancied that I saw more than one fair face peering shyly from the green depths of yonder clump of young chestnuts, and —— but you laugh, Annie. This is all nonsense to you.”

“Not exactly, Richard. I do not know much about Grecian mythology, to be sure; but sometimes, when I have come along through the woods from school, I have fancied that the trees were talking to each other, and have stopped to listen; but, though I stood very still, I could never catch a word; for, when I stopped, they became silent, and seemed watching and waiting for me to go on. But tell me more, Richard.”

With her hand in his, and her clear eyes raised to his face, the young girl listened while Richard Fanshaw went on to tell how, busy with these fancies, he fell asleep and wandered in the wondrous realm of Dreamland, through regions of enchanting loveliness, steeping his soul in that bewildering atmosphere, and revelling in pleasure, until he well-nigh forgot his high aspirations, that would have plucked the stars from heaven. How, suddenly and swiftly as the shooting of a star, the memory of them came upon him, filling his soul with unrest and disquiet, and, haunted by a sense of imperfection and loneliness, he fled onward through a region in striking contrast to the one he had left; arid, gloomy and barren; destitute of vegetation, save where rank, poisonous water-plants grew around pools of green, slimy water, that lay

sweltering beneath the lurid sun. Ugly, fiend-like faces grinned at him from the murky atmosphere, and clutched at him with their long, bony fingers whenever he lost his foothold in the treacherous sands, or slipped by the dreary pools of water. Their mocking tones were in his ears, filling him with terror; but above them all sounded one more fearful still, for it seemed like the voice of his own heart driving him onward to destruction. A terrible thirst consumed him; his steps began to falter, and his eyes to grow dim; but his hearing, like that of many dying people, became more acute, and he could still hear the mocking voices and resolve the discordant sounds into words. One and all they cried, "Fool! dreamer! truth is a fable. Purity and goodness are idle dreams! Enjoy the present, for there is *no* future!" while that strangely-familiar voice kept repeating the words in low, but distinctly audible whispers, as if it mused upon their import. Just as he was about to yield to their influence, his ear caught the sweet murmur of forest leaves, and a breath of pure, fresh air fell on his throbbing brow. His weary heart recognized them as heaven-sent messengers, and, rallying his strength, he sprang forward in the direction from which they came.

The fearful voices grew fainter, dying away like the wailing winds of autumn; his step grew firmer; his eyesight clearer, until every trace of that hideous landscape disappeared, and there lay around him a scene of exquisite beauty, yet widely different from the one that had so enchanted him at first. That atmosphere had enervated while it intoxicated; but this was pure and healthful as the kiss of a gentle mother. Suddenly, he came to a crystal fountain, shaded by a drooping birch, and set round with broad, cool stones; in short, it was very much like the spring at their feet, save that the waters were far clearer, and the yellow sand at the bottom of a far brighter golden hue.

How, choking with thirst, he eagerly knelt on the brink

but just as his greedy lip neared the water, a wondrously-beautiful maiden stood before him. Whether she rose from the fountain, as the agitation of sand at the bottom seemed to indicate, or stepped from the bole of the old tree, he could not tell. With one hand she gathered her loose robe about her, while in the other she held a few broad leaves of the Egyptian Calla, encircling the wand-like stalk with its creamy spatha and blossom. With this she motioned him back, and, in tones far sweeter than the murmur of the waters, though strongly like it, she said :

“Mortal, what brings you to my fountain?”

With an effort to loosen his parched tongue, he replied :

“A weary, thirsty heart.”

“Drink, and thirst no more,” she replied, folding one of the broad calla leaves in the shape of a cup, and placing it in his hand.

Richard Fanshaw paused, and sat for some moments looking thoughtfully into the spring.

Little Annie, who watched his countenance intently, nestled closer to his side, and pressed the hand that still clasped hers, as if to remind him of her presence.

“I saw her no more,” he said, at length, “for, just as I raised the cup to my lips, your love of mischief awoke me. Yet she must have been a real maiden,” he continued, “for her hand was soft and warm as yours, Annie; and, when her fingers met mine, as she gave me the cup, a strange, indescribable feeling run through my whole frame; as if my heart suddenly gushed over with happiness, just as the water there gushes up at the bottom of the spring.”

We need hardly say that Richard Fanshaw was a dreamer—a dweller in the beautiful land of shadows. The love of beauty, from the undefined yearnings of childhood, had grown with his growth, until it had become to him a passion and a *hope*; and, as he walked homeward, along the winding forest-path, with his arm thrown protectingly around the shoulders

of his young companion, still dwelling on his dream, there was a light in his dark eye, and an earnestness, an exultation in his tones, that told, far more plainly than his words, how deeply his heart accepted the dream as a prophecy that this hope would yet become a *certainty*.

It would be not only a curious, but an interesting study, to trace out the circumstances that exercise a controlling influence in the formation of such characters as that of Richard Fanshaw. Of course, the estimate must ever be partial, because conjectural, but we are disposed to think that if those who are so ready to condemn, were to take the study up, or even to look into the history of their own inner life, they would gain some new lessons in psychology, and partake somewhat more largely of that divine charity "that thinketh no evil."

We have said that young Fanshaw was imaginative; but, until now, nothing had occurred to give shape and coloring to the vague reveries that thronged his busy brain. But this dream — this egeria of the fountain — came like the angel of Bethesda to stir the slumbering depths of his heart, and fill it with passionate longings and delicious unrest.

That form, those eyes, clear, dark and deep as mountain springs, haunted him by day and night, and became identified with all the

" Hopes, dreams, desires of wild ambition born,
Whose dazzling light athwart his early morn
Streamed radiantly, and on his spirit fell
Like a fire-baptism."

Each day deepened the conviction that he was born to achieve a lofty destiny, and he brooded over the thought until the quiet monotony of Maplehurst became irksome to him. With a crowd of proud aspirations rioting in his heart, he kissed the sobbing Annie, his pet and plaything from her birth, took the blessing of his dewy-eyed mother, and, eager

to forestall time, threw himself into the rushing current of life.

We may not follow him in all his wanderings through the world-wide search which his restless, haunted heart led him. Iceland and Italy, Germany and Arabia, the wild Caucasian regions and those of "far Cathay," left their cosmopolitan influence upon him,

"Until the mother that him bore
Would scarce have known her child."

We may not number the "shrines of beauty at which he put up prayers," — shrines before which his yearning heart lay hushed in prophetic anticipation, like the sea beneath the rising moon; nor how they all proved but "summer pilots unto the shores of nothing."

Neither will we attempt to sound the depths of error into which his impetuous nature led him, the consequent suffering and self-renunciation. We love not such records, and, therefore, hasten to say that after an absence of many years, gray at heart, world-worn, care-worn, with his ideal still unfound, and all his lofty dreams unrealized, he returned to his native village, and stood beneath the roof that sheltered his childhood, a stranger.

It is a quiet spot, — Our Village, — so quiet as almost to cheat Father Time himself into forgetfulness. Undoubtedly a blank leaf or so in the church records had been filled out with births, deaths and marriages; the old brown houses had taken a dingier hue, and the button-woods before the doors cast a much broader shade than when he left; a railing had been added to the bridge; but the old crossing-pole, back of his mother's house, was still the same, even to the patches of green moss on its crumbling sides; and the stepping-stones, which he had laid so many years before, were all in their places, with the clear water rippling around them, exactly as of yore. But his mother slept in the grave-yard beyond the

river, and his brother's gentle wife sat in her place, surrounded by a group of bright-eyed children, who were ready to hide their faces in the folds of their mother's dress at every word and caress from their dark-visaged, foreign-looking uncle.

The news of his arrival flew with telegraphic speed, and old acquaintances, curious to hear his adventures, and eager to welcome him home, called to see him, and left the house disappointed. Instead of the bright-faced, joyous youth they remembered, they found a tall, dignified-looking man, polite but reserved, and little disposed to gratify their curiosity by becoming the hero of his own story.

He heard, with more of interest than he had before manifested, that Annie Bradford was still unmarried, and, as soon as he could disengage himself from his visitors, he took the well-remembered path toward her dwelling. He had not gone many rods before he diverged from it, as if struck by some sudden thought, and took the more circuitous one that led round by the "Sibyl's Spring." That, too, was unchanged, and he stood and gazed into its clear depths, while old memories gushed up from his heart as rapidly as the bright water from the golden land. Suddenly a light touch fell upon his arm. He turned, and met the clear, friendly glance of Annie Bradford.

"Richard!"—"Annie!"—they exclaimed in the same breath.

With a thoughtful, yet eager look, as if he found there the key to the destiny whose shadow had so long lain upon his heart, he gazed into those clear eyes, now deepened and intensified by all the hopes of ripened womanhood, that were upturned to his, until the white lids grew tremulous, and drooped involuntarily. With ready tact, and something of her childish archness, she said:

"Have you found her,—the Maiden of the Fountain,—Richard? You know you promised to bring her with you when you returned."

He did not reply, but kept his eyes riveted on her face, as if it were the book of fate. At length a bright smile, like a star from behind a heavy cloud, broke over his sunburnt face, and he replied :

“ I *have* found her, Annie.”

“ Where, where is she, then? They told me you came alone.”

Richard Fanshaw threw his arm around her waist, with the familiarity of days long gone, and, drawing her forward a step or two, pointed to the image of her own sweet face mirrored in the limpid water.

“ *There*, Annie, there ! ”

Again their eyes met, and the object of his long and weary search was accomplished. His destiny was solved.

Drawing her closer to him, he continued :

“ My toilsome search is ended, the dream of my boyhood interpreted. I bring you but a weary, thirsty heart. Will you accept it, Annie ? ”

Her reply was lower, but far sweeter to his wayworn heart than the musical murmur of the waters. Once more they sat, hand in hand, on the green moss beneath the old birch-tree, and, as Richard Fanshaw gazed on the fair face resting on his shoulder, and wondered at his stupid blindness, he repeated more than once the words of one who has built to herself a shrine in every loving heart :

“ O, happiness, how far we flee

Thine own sweet paths in search of thee ! ”

XI.

THE OLD MAPLE.

CHAPTER I.

“ I found him garrulously given,
A babbler in the land.”

“ As each person has his own separate remembrances, giving to some places an aspect and significance which he alone can perceive, there must be an infinite number of pleasing, mournful, or dreadful associations spread over the inhabited earth.” — *Foster's Essays*.

WAS it wholly the power of which wise John Foster speaks, that made the place so sadly pleasant, as I sat by the old maple, tracing with my fingers the seams in its rough bark, counting the incisions through which it had for years poured forth its life-blood to sweeten the teas, if not the tempers, of the Brae family, and — thinking? Or was the spell assisted by some “fallen old divinity” hid in its massive bole? The divinity must have had a share in it, for I remember noting a low, musical murmur among the swelling buds above me, that were yearning in their velvet prisons to look out into the warm eyes of Spring. Let us reverently believe so, reader mine, for neither of us, I trust, belongs to that painfully wise class,

“ Who think all happy things are dreams,
Because they overstep the narrow bourn
Of likelihood.”

It was a pleasant, sunny spot, — just like one of the “wee green neuks” you wot of, fair lady, in some of the deep vales of your native state; too tame to be romantic, too quiet to interest hasty observers, and yet too sweet and dear

to be forgotten. I doubt whether Mr. Brae, or his son John, who were on the knoll above me, ever thought of it otherwise than as a valuable part of their well-watered and productive farm. I had not seen the place for years, and now I felt that, for me, it was written all over with heart-histories.

And then just over the knoll was the old farm-house, with its spacious barns and well-thatched sheep-cotes. I wondered if there were as many swallows' nests as of yore clustered beneath the eaves or plastered to the rafters of the barn; and if the old wren still built her nest in the hollow limb of the apple-tree that overhung the great horse-block by the gate. Ah me! I had gazed on many a masterpiece of art that seemed to glow with divine fire, and yet not one of them spoke to my heart more deeply than that same old, rude, misshapen horse-block. To us children it was a city of refuge when our happiness became too obstreperous for the long-suffering nerves of kind Mrs. Brae, or when, by any mischance, a slice of buttered bread came in too close contact with the floor. Thus in summer it was our table and play-room. There often, in the warm sunshine of the springs that will never come again, were Nelly Brae and I perched, with a pile of willow branches, and a broken penknife which we owned between us. O, the whistles we made! for we did make some perfect ones, though often unsuccessful; and when, after a long attempt, a perfect (that is, a very noisy) whistle was finished, how proudly we sprang to our feet and poured forth our notes of triumph!

Do not frown; for, believe me, we were daily told to "sit up straight and behave like women." But, somehow, the first puff of fresh air blew the lesson out of our heads. And besides, all sorts of funny-looking rag babies lying about bore witness that we were sufficiently feminine. And we had dolls, too — real wax dolls; but, like some other careful mothers, we deemed them much too choice for the touch of

common air. And there was also a whole set of acorn tea-cups and saucers stowed away in the great knot-hole under the second step of the horse-block, which served us for a china closet.

On my right, as I stood there communing with the past, lay the wooded pasture, well known through the neighborhood as the "maple lot." I looked for the narrow footpath by which we were accustomed to reach the "sugar-works" sooner than by the rather devious cart-path. There it was, with its show of tender, green grass, looking like a narrow green ribbon amid the dead, dry herbage of the preceding summer.

I left my seat, and, following the path, crossed the spring brook on the identical old stepping-stones, and stood on the spot that had so often been the village gathering-place — the very centre of mischief and frolic. It was now sadly changed. The rude building was gone. The rough furnace was tumbling down, and from the rich, damp mould beneath sprang a tall sweet-briar. Ah! the glory had left the old sugar-works!

Some of the "sugar-trees" were still standing. But I missed the stately form of many an old friend, whose Orphic murmurs gave me a clearer insight into the mysteries of being than I have since gained

— "from learned books,
Or study-withered men."

The new, white chips scattered around many of the stumps showed some of the trees had been felled lately. But the stumps alone remained of two that had stood in front of the sugar-house, between whose half unearthed roots Nell and I used to spread our red flannel blankets for carpets, and arrange our houses, when we played "go to see one another."

But the ever kind Nature, that embraces and loves even what man casts off, had bidden the ground-laurel spread its

shining green leaves around the decaying stumps, and the silvery brown umbels of the gnaphalium crowned them with an everlasting crown.

Re-crossing the brook, I met Mr. Brae, and pointing to the old maple I expressed my joy to find it still standing.

"Why, it is a kind of crooked disciple," he replied, "and might as well be cut down. But, somehow, the children always took a kind of liking to it, especially Nelly and her little boy. I guess she was here as often as once a day when she was at home last summer. And that little rogue, Harry, says his mother's tree shall not be cut down."

Yes, Nelly loved that old tree, and well might its wide shade seem to her a consecrated temple; for underneath its spreading branches she first listened to words and tones that became the charm of her life, and which death has no power to destroy.

But before I "tell you all about it," as the children say, I have a word or two to offer touching Nelly Brae herself. Were it possible I would describe her in such terms as would make her steal your hearts as entirely as she did ours. I might as well attempt to describe the wind. Not that she was beautiful—we never thought of calling her a beauty; but she was so wild and wayward, apparently so changeful, and yet so gentle and true, so full of heart. Indeed, she was more like a free, glad summer breeze than aught else on earth; and, like that, she went wandering about the green fields and along the shining brooks, gathering freshness and fragrance, while her soul unconsciously grew rich by daily seeking.

Perhaps this waywardness, this spirit of non-conformity, lent the spell that saved her from becoming that most disagreeable of all pets, a spoiled grandchild. Some powerful influence was needed to neutralize the effect of grandmother Brae's overweening fondness. Mr. Brae was a man of the old school. His notions of family government, as manifested

in the training of his own children, were very strict, if not always very wise. But when he undertook to pursue the same course with little Nell, his heart turned traitor.

When he had cause to reprimand her, he invariably began with a stern voice and still sterner look. But he never could proceed far before her slight, willowy form would grow indistinct, and he would seem to hold in his arms a rosy infant, that looked up in his face, and laughed and patted his wet cheeks, as he bent over the coffin that contained the dead form of its fair young mother. He would remember how his own brave boy died before his child saw the light; how, after the mother was laid by his side in the church-yard, they brought the baby to the old farm-house and laid it in the long-unused cradle; how they sat by it, filled with heaviness and sorrow; and how the smiles that broke over its face gradually kindled their minds to faith and joy. When the old man thought of all this, and how the child had been to them "a smile from God" to dispel the darkness from their pathway, his brow would relax, his voice grow tremulous, and his censures all change to blessings.

Thus the child grew up like a bright wild-flower, planted in some quaint, old-fashioned garden. She seemed to have established a secret correspondence with Nature, for "all things talked thoughts to her." For her each bird, flower and passing cloud seemed to have a particular message. She always spoke of them as *her* birds, *her* flowers, *her* clouds. Strange fancies of this sort seemed to increase as she grew older; and even on her wedding day, when I flung a twig of ivy and a handful of sage into her lap, and laughingly bade her study their meaning, she gathered them up, and, placing them in her bosom, declared gravely that they should be the oracles of her household, and that her first care should be to plant with her own hand, around her new abode, those emblems of love and virtue.

CHAPTER II.

“Curse the tongue,
Whence slanderous rumor, like the adder’s drop,
Distils her venom, withering friendship’s faith,
Turning love’s favor.” — *Hillhouse*.

Nelly Brae and I had been playmates from infancy. Our homes were on different roads, but we were near neighbors, for the long, triangular tongue of land between the roads was narrow, and the well-trodden path across it showed plainly that our families were not strangers to each other.

We were still school-girls when Mr. Markham, the new pastor, succeeded in awakening the people to an interest in church music, which had been sadly neglected during the last years of good old Parson Mines. A liberal sum of money was subscribed, and a committee appointed to arrange a singing-school.

A winter singing-school in New England! Who, that draws breath beneath her changeful sky, does not feel his heart beat quicker at those words! Not with remembered pride of progress in the heaven-born science, but at the memory of pleasant faces, merry greetings, “nods and becks, and wreathed smiles,” and friendships formed, among which, perhaps, was that one which grew to dear love, and gave to him the cherished one from whose eyes and voice he has since learned music by heart.

The projected singing-school became a matter of absorbing interest to the young people, when it was announced that the committee had been so fortunate as to engage Mr. Henry Wilson, a graduate of Yale College, and a personal friend of Mr. Markham. My parents were very anxious that my brother and I should attend the singing-school, but no persuasions could gain Mrs. Brae’s consent to Nelly’s attendance. We talked in vain of her sweet voice; for whenever the old

lady seemed consenting, she would suddenly recollect that there was "no one to go with her," for John (the only son remaining at home) would not always come home when she did, and Dick and I, she said, could not always come round that way, for the fields would sometimes be full of snow. Besides, she conjured up such horrors of colds, wet feet, brain fevers, lung fevers and consumptions, that Nell and I gave way in despair.

Nelly was mortified and indignant at the thought of being kept at home like a little girl, a child, when she was sixteen years, ten months, and I will not undertake to say exactly how many days, old. But her slight figure, as well as grandmother Brae's notions, was against her, and "child" she was considered by the whole neighborhood.

The teacher was to spend two or three days with his friend, Mr. Markham, before he commenced his school. The morning after his arrival in town, as Nell and I sat talking it over, and considering what could be done in her behalf, we were almost beside ourselves with delight, to hear the old lady say, as she passed the corner where we sat :

"Well, well, child, I'll see about it. You need n't feel so poorly; may-be you'll go, after all. There is time enough to think about it between this and Thursday night."

We viewed the matter as settled, for Mrs. Brae's "I'll see about it" was always equivalent to a positive assent. Of this we felt so sure, that, during recess at school that day, we talked only of the dresses we should wear to the singing-school, and on our way home made the important decision that our hoods should be lined and trimmed with crimson instead of pink. Therefore, I was somewhat surprised, that evening, to see Nell come panting in, and fling herself into a chair with a look of comical distress.

"What is the matter, Nell?" asked my mother and I together.

"They will not let me go!"

"Go where?" inquired my mother, who did not understand.

"To the singing-school," she replied, endeavoring to hide her tears.

"Won't let you go, Nell!" I cried. "Why, your grandmother as good as promised you might go!"

"Yes, but Mrs. Crane came over to-night, and made such a fuss about her 'Bubby,' and such dreadful complaints against me, that grandpa is really vexed, and grandma says I shall stay at home till I can behave myself and keep out of mischief."

"What has that great booby, bubby Crane, to do with your going to singing-school? Did n't you help him put on his mittens? Did you let him fall down?"

"Worse, though I did n't mean to hurt him. You know Aunt Mary gave me a box of rhubarb for grandmother. Bubby Crane thought it was ground cinnamon, and teased me all the way home to let him taste it. Well, he called me stingy, and made such a fuss that I opened the box and let him taste. I did n't think he would be so greedy, but he lapped up a great mouthful of it," she continued, with an expression of merriment dimpling round her mouth, "and I guess he swallowed a good dose. It half strangled him, and I could not help laughing to see him spit. He ran screaming home, and immediately his mother came over with a furious complaint against me."

We all laughed at the idea of Mrs. Crane's baby, a great boy, ten years old, with his mouth full of rhubarb

"What is to be done now, Nell?" I asked.

"O, I don't know! Go home with me, Fanny; perhaps you can persuade her."

We were soon seated, with our knitting, by the side of Mrs. Brae. Nothing was said of Nelly's misdemeanor. The old lady was gradually led to talk of the days of her youth, and she soon became eloquent in maintaining that people

now-a-days are not half as healthy, wise, or good as they were when she was young. She sang us old tunes, which I praised. She made us sing with her, and qualified her praise of our singing, by saying we should "do well enough if we didn't open our mouths so wide and sing so loud." We were all quavering away on "Majesty" when Mr. Brae entered, accompanied by Mr. Markham, and a stranger, who was introduced to us as our teacher, Mr. Wilson.

"I wished Mr. Wilson to become acquainted with some of the families in the neighborhood, and I believe I have brought him to the right place now, Mrs. Brae," said the minister. "You are all singers, and my young friends here will attend the singing-school, of course."

"Fanny is going, I believe," began the old lady. "I did think of sending Nelly, but she is so wild and mischievous that she will only trouble the gentleman. Besides, there is no one to go with her; John is such a crazy head he would n't come home with her half the time."

"O, you must let Nelly go! She has a beautiful voice."

"Why, yes, she can sing a little," said the old man, looking at her proudly and fondly. "Come here, Nelly, and sing one of the old songs you sung to me last night."

Nell rose, and stood timidly by her grandfather.

"Which shall I sing?" she asked, without venturing to look up.

"Either, child; they were all good, for they were home songs."

She began the old, ever beautiful, "Afton Water," and sang it through in clear, unfaltering tones. Her voice was untrained, but full of deep, rich melody. Wilson listened with evident surprise and delight. He turned to the old man, and said:

"You will not refuse to let her become my pupil, Mr. Brae! Such a voice as that should be cultivated by all means,"

The old man was pleased; Nell looked wistfully in his face, and he said, with a smile, "They are all on your side, child. If there was only some one to go with you, I wouldn't say a word."

"Dick and I will come round this way, every night," I exclaimed, eagerly.

"Ay, that would do, Fanny, if there were to be no snow."

"If that is your only objection, Mr. Brae," said Wilson, "it can be removed, if you will trust your grand-daughter to my care. I shall board with your neighbor, Mr. Morris, and, if you do not object, shall be happy to call for her."

The old people hesitated, and talked of the trouble. Mr. Wilson insisted that he could not do without Nelly's voice; Mr. Markham seconded his proposal, and it was finally agreed that Nelly should attend the school under Mr. Wilson's escort.

This arrangement pleased all but herself. "I wonder how you could tell him I shall go!" she said, as the door closed on the visitors.

"Why, I thought you wanted to go, child."

"So I do; but I don't want to go with him. He is so minister-like, that I shall not dare to breathe on the way. I wish Mr. Markham had not brought him here."

"Fie! child, fie!" said the grandmother. "Mr. Wilson's offer to take care of you was very kind, and I'm glad if you are afraid of him."

"I can run away from him, you know," said Nell, laughing.

She did not run away from him, though. After a week or two, she not only breathed with her accustomed ease, but laughed as merrily as ever. True she was not always with him, for she was frequently *kiting* off, as Mrs. Brae expressed it, in pursuit of some wayward fancy; now for a slide on some tempting piece of ice; now to draw her fingers across

a row of icicles that hung from the topmost rail of the fence, when she would hush us all to listen to their music, as they splintered in the still moonbeams.

Harry Wilson was an indulgent guardian, and she soon found that the grave expression of his eyes could change to one of mirth, and that his somewhat haughty mouth could relax into a smile as sweet and merry as her own. He soon became a great favorite with old and young, and his school succeeded admirably.

We met in the White School House. As Mr. Wilson was usually one of the last to leave, Nell, at his request, waited until he was ready to attend her. This soon drew the attention and excited the pleasantry of the older girls; but when Mrs. Morris, an empty-headed, gossiping busy-body, assured them that Mrs. Brac as good as asked him to wait on Nell, and that she knew that he wished the little plague a thousand miles off, their smiles became contemptuous titters.

As the weeks went on, they grew surprised, and even indignant, to see that, instead of making an effort to shake off the "little plague," Mr. Wilson not only stopped an hour or so after singing-school, but passed most of his leisure evenings at Mr. Brac's.

"What could he find there to interest him?"

Had they asked him instead of Mrs. Morris, he might have answered, "A home!"

Somehow he loved to be at Mr. Brac's; somehow he loved to sit by Nell, and hear her voice mingle with his in a favorite melody; somehow her wild Æolian tones gave his heart a fuller, brighter sense of existence. He taught her music because he delighted to do so, and he did not ask himself why he taught her to drop "Mr. Wilson" and call him Harry.

He might have said, also, that most other people, where he called, showed an over-anxiety to impress him with the notion that they knew something of gentility and fashion;

while many were so distressingly formal and ceremonious in their manner toward him, that he did not care to call a second time.

Mrs. Morris, true to her first statement, insisted that "Grandmother Brae" was constantly scheming to secure to Nell a double share of instruction in music; and, in the plenitude of her benevolence, she determined to assist him out of "the scrape."

"It was a shame and disgrace," she said, "that he must not only have that child tagging after him to singing-school, but must also go there every other evening to give her music lessons."

The evening after she came to this determination, it happened that Mr. Wilson sat down at home to copy some music for Nell. Mrs. Morris sat near him, rocking to and fro, and watching for an opportunity to begin her good work. At length, as he laid down his pen and opened his portfolio for another sheet of paper, she began:

"You ought to have been at home this afternoon, Mr. Wilson. I had some calls, or perhaps they were intended for you; one can't always tell, you know."

"Indeed!" he replied, taking his pen again and proceeding with his copy.

"Yes," she continued, as if determined not to be foiled, "Maria Bennet and Sarah Slocum have been here half the afternoon. I inquired about your school; but their heads were so full of the party John Brae is going to give at his sugar-works, that they could think of nothing else. You have heard all about the party, I suppose."

"Yes, I believe so," he replied, bringing down his pen with a heavy *staccato* on the last notes of the third bar.

"Thoughtless things! it made me sad to see them," she went on; "but girls are girls, though they don't behave now as they did in my day. There is Mary Grant, and Fanny Alden, and my old neighbor Brae's girl; they are nothing but

children, and, la me ! look at them ! They are as pert and as forward as if they were twenty years old. I dare say you have noticed them. I like to see children know their places, don't you, Mr. Wilson ? ”

“ Certainly,” said the young man, mechanically, without pausing from his work.

“ Ah, I knew you would agree with me, Mr. Wilson ! I hate pertness and forwardness above all things ; but you can't expect much from a child whose grand-parents are constantly pushing her forward, and fastening her to other people, whether they want her or not. There are not many who would bear it as you do.”

Here Mrs. Morris was obliged to pause, for Mr. Wilson, who had not attended to a word of her harangue, caught up his flute, and, after playing the music once or twice, took his hat and left the room.

“ Well, now,” she said to herself, “ he has gone right over there again ! I meant to have had a little more talk with him, but I have found out that it is just as I supposed. I'll set matters to rights to-morrow ; I'll go over there and tell Nelly just what he thinks of her. It will be no more than friendly, for she has no mother, and grandmother Brae is getting old and foolish.”

Mrs. Morris did not forget her resolution. She went over next day, immediately after school, and found Nelly alone. After some inquiries about the family, the lady's voice suddenly changed from its usual loud, shrill key, to the piteous, disagreeable whine commonly adopted by women of her stamp on like occasions. Then she went on to relate her conversation with Mr. Wilson, making, from the outset, only the slight mistake of imputing to him the language she had used herself.

At first Nell opened her clear, brown eyes, as if she did not understand. But as Mrs. Morris went on to say he called her pert and forward, and laughed at her grand-

parents, a thousand gleaming rays seemed to converge and centre in the pupils of the girl's eyes, and her sudden exclamation, "I don't believe it!" fairly startled that amiable lady.

"I suppose not, my dear; people are not apt to believe unpleasant things," she said; "but I heard him say it, else I should hardly believe it myself. But you need n't take it on my word. The young folks have been talking it over this month past; if you don't believe me, ask them."

On my way to singing-school that night I called on Nell. Instead of answering my merry greetings, she burst into tears, and it was a long time before she would tell the occasion of her grief.

"I do not believe it!" I said, as she closed her somewhat disconnected account of her interview with Mrs. Morris. "I have heard something of this before, but I do not believe Mr. Wilson ever said or thought such things. I'll ask him."

"Not for the world, Fanny!—not for the world! Mrs. Morris says she heard him say it, last night, and it must be so. You know he never would have thought of calling for me, if grandpa and grandma had not spoken just as they did about my going to singing-school. But to have him make fun of me, and say I kept putting myself in his way, it is too bad!" and her tears fell fast.

I thought it was too bad, but felt there must be some mistake. She refused to attend the singing-school again, until I said such a course would occasion more talk, and told her that Dick and I would come for her very early, and that when there was much snow she could spend the night with me. She consented to this arrangement, but refused to go that night.

Harry Wilson called at the usual hour. When Nell heard his steps on the threshold, she caught up a deep hood, and

drawing it over her face, bent over a porringer of gruel that stood on the hearth, and began to stir it.

"I have brought the music I promised you, Nelly," he said, with a smile. "We shall not have time to practise it till after school, for it is almost half past six now. Come, get your bonnet and cloak."

Nell murmured something about her grandmother's illness, and staying at home.

"Why, child, you need not stay at home on that account," said the old man.

"Indeed, I think I shall not go, grandpa; I shall be wanted here," she said, with a firmer tone.

"Well, I will call as I return, and we will try the music. To-morrow Mr. Markham and I start for H——. We shall be absent two or three days, and you must have the air perfect when I return. But pray don't stir the bottom of that dish out while I am gone," said Mr. Wilson, laughing, as he closed the door.

Long before he returned, Nell went to her chamber. She was grieved, wounded, bewildered. She could not understand such baseness, and she laid her head on her pillow that night with feelings to which she had hitherto been a stranger.

Harry Wilson and Mr. Markham returned late on Saturday night. The next evening, on his way to singing-school, he called, as usual, for Nelly. But she and I were already at the school-house. He was disappointed and disturbed. Somehow his short absence had made him feel, more deeply than ever, that to see and speak with Nelly was necessary to his happiness. And he would see her, he thought, as he returned. But no; Nelly had obtained permission to spend the night with me, and before most of our companions had arranged their hoods and cloaks we were half way home.

That night Mr. Wilson was in no mood to listen to the endless gossip of Mrs. Morris. He was angry with himself,

with Nell, and not particularly pleased with the world in general.

"She is too flighty, too thoughtless," he said to himself. "I have seen too much of the world for such childishness to trouble me." His knowledge of the world had been such as to make him morbidly sensitive in all that related to the affections. Many a fair face had caught his fancy; but it was really true that none had touched his heart like little Nelly Brae's. He now began to see that he unconsciously treasured up every graceful movement and winning smile, and made them the food of his dreams. He was startled at the strength and depth of his feelings. What did Nelly mean? Why did she avoid him? What did he mean himself?

CHAPTER III.

"O! rock, upon thy towery top
All throats that gurgle sweet!
All starry culmination drop
Balm dews to bathe thy feet!

"The fat earth feed thy branchy root,
That under deeply strikes!
The northern morning o'er thee shoot
High up in silver spikes!"

It was early in the sugar season, and John Brae had given out invitations for a party at his shanty, on the first pleasant evening of the full moon. This happened the next evening. Nelly and I spent the afternoon at the "sap-works," assisting John in his arrangements. His shanty was a building some fifteen feet square, rudely constructed of posts and rough boards. John had devised an addition, of which the two old maples in front were to be the corner posts. Branches of cedar and hemlock served for clapboards and thatch. We wreathed the bare walls of the main building with evergreen;

and the great half-hogshead tub in the corner, covered over with clean, white boards, served for a side-table, on which we placed sundry dishes of butternuts, walnuts and apples. A large covered-basket stood in the centre, containing bread, butter, salt, and several dozens of fresh eggs, which usually formed the chief article of refreshment on such occasions. The last seat was arranged, the rude floors nicely swept, and, having nothing more to do, we paused to survey our work.

"It is really a very pretty place," said I.

"Pretty enough," Neil replied, sadly.

"Pretty enough!" I exclaimed, rather vexed at her scant praise. "It is beautiful! If it could be well lighted, it would look about as well as the church on Christmas eve."

"Sure enough," said John, coming up. "Can't you contrive to have it well lighted up, girls?"

"We have candles enough, but we have only eight sticks, for grandmother will not let us have her plated ones."

"Wait a bit, girls. I'll fix it," he said, opening a box that served as a kind of tool-chest; and presently, by means of augers and pine blocks, he provided a great supply of candlesticks.

Our arrangements all finished, we went home to get tea, and dress for the evening. Nell would gladly have remained at home, but she knew that her absence would excite surprise and conjecture. Besides, she had been the chief influence in persuading John to give the party.

When we reached our woodland bower, the beams of the rising moon were around the leafy door-way, struggling to steal in and sleep on the floor, as longingly as if it had been of Parian marble; and a few stars looked down through the openings in the hemlock thatch, like guardian spirits. Our candlesticks did well, and the effect of the light was fine, though here and there a bunch of hemlock leaves crisped and crackled as they came in contact with the blazing wicks. The

night was beautiful. The atmosphere was so clear and elastic, that we could hear the voices and footsteps of our guests coming across the fields long before they reached the shanty.

Ah! those were happy hours; as happy as youth, health and unworn hearts could make them. I will not pretend to say how many games of forfeit were played; nor how many of the forfeits were kisses; nor how often the long, spiral apple-peelings, when dropped over the right shoulder, formed the very letters which, by all the laws of magic, they were bound to form; nor with what a half-pleased, half-coquettish air the maidens held forth their palms full of apple-seeds, while John, Fred, or Sam, or whoever had "named the apples," counted them over and over, to see if they would spell the given name; nor how, if he succeeded, they were thrown into his bosom with a toss of the head, and, "I wonder how any one can be so ridiculous!"

Apples! O, blessed be apples! they have been famed in philosophy and song; but neither the golden ones of Idalian Aphrodite, nor the famous one of Sir Isaac Newton, ever possessed such delightful magic as the Rhode Island greenings that made part of our entertainment that evening at John Brae's sap-house.

The whole arcana of magic lay hid in their seeds, if one only possessed the skill to interpret them, and Nelly was deeply versed in all such lore. At our gatherings she was the acknowledged sibyl. But she was too busy now arranging the table, and discussing with John and a merry-pated old bachelor the precise number of minutes necessary to boil an egg, to pay much attention to the calls for her.

At length Mary Grant came into the back room, and, twining her arm around Nell's waist, attempted to draw her into the "green room," as we styled the new apartment.

"No, excuse, Nelly," she cried; "we are determined to have our fortunes told. You are the only witch present, and you must come."

"Nonsense, Mary! I can't go; I am busy."

"You had better come, Nelly," she said, significantly; then, lowering her voice to a whisper, she added, "some of them say you would not be so sober and old-womanish if somebody they could name were here."

Nell colored deeply, and, yielding to Mary's movement, passed into the green-room. Here she became the centre of the company, and, Mary having stealthily put a wreath of holly-leaves around her head, she sat with comic gravity uttering predictions that were received with shouts of laughter, when suddenly the rude door opened, and Harry Wilson entered. He was received with a loud welcome, and immediately drawn into the circle.

Until within a few days Nell had poured forth her thoughts and feelings with the unconstrained freedom of a bird. But she was now learning to act the woman, with the owlish world for a tutor, and of course her first lesson was concealment. She pressed down her rising heart, and, taking advantage of her assumed character, she bowed gravely to Mr. Wilson and went on with her predictions. Presently she arose, and, placing the wreath on Mary's head, said, "There, good folk, I can stay no longer; I must away."

"No, no! you have not told Mr. Wilson's fortune yet. You cannot go yet!" cried three or four, pressing round to prevent her escape.

"Indeed, I must go; there, John is calling me now; do let me go!" she exclaimed hastily, as if afraid to trust her voice.

Mr. Wilson himself made way for her to pass, saying, as he did so, "No, no, good friends. It is unwise to attempt to compel fate. I fear my fortune would be a dark one if told by an unwilling sibyl."

A merrier set than was gathered round our table that night could not be found in old Connecticut. Mr. Wilson, as our most distinguished guest, was seated by Nell at the head of

the table. But no words passed between them, save such as were absolutely necessary. We kept primitive hours, and at ten o'clock there was a general call for hoods and cloaks. Amid the confusion, and "more last words," Mr. Wilson approached Nell, who stood by the table searching a great basket as if she expected to find happiness at the bottom, and proposed to escort her home. He did not catch her reply, for at that moment half a dozen gathered round him to inquire about the approaching concert. When he turned to offer his arm she was gone.

He mingled with the group around the door, but she was not there. Vexed and wounded by her strange conduct, he took the more frequented path home, but he had not proceeded far before he caught a glimpse of her form moving rapidly along the path that led round by the old maple. He paused and hesitated. He knew she could not cross the stream on the stepping-stones, for he had tried it that evening. The late rains had made the crossing so difficult that he had been obliged to turn back and take the other path.

The next moment he was following her with rapid steps. Before he reached the crossing-place, he left the path and sprang across the stream, some rods higher up. In her haste she had proceeded about one third of the way across, before she saw that the stones in the middle of the stream were completely out of sight. She stood hesitating, when he suddenly appeared, caught her in his arms, and bore her across without speaking. She gazed at him a moment in astonishment, but, as he turned to leave her, she burst into tears. He paused, and, turning back, asked eagerly:

"What does all this mean, Nelly?"

She could not reply, for tears. He stood a moment irresolute, and then led her on to the old maple.

"Will you not tell me what it means?" he asked again.

She made an effort to stifle her sobs, and, looking up through her tears, said, "I suppose it was not quite proper for me to

say what grandfather did. But he did not mean anything improper. I was foolish to go,— but I did not think you could be so unkind, so cruel, Harry.”

“But what have I done, Nell?”

“Perhaps you did not mean it just as Mrs. Morris makes it seem; but to think you could talk so of me!” and she sobbed again more deeply than before.

“Hush, hush, Nelly! Do explain yourself; what have I said to Mrs. Morris?”

By degrees he drew from her an account of her interview with Mrs. Morris. We need not say how eagerly and indignantly he exculpated himself; nor what earnest and beautiful words he whispered, as he drew her closer and closer to his bosom. Memory, or the prophetic yearnings of your own heart, will tell you what they were. I will only say that the lazy sap in the old tree took a livelier motion; and ever afterwards troops of sweet flowers, such as the anemone and meek-eyed arbutus, came yearly to dwell at its foot, and bless it with their fragrant beauty.

* * * * *

“And is that all, Fanny?” asks E——, with a look of disappointment not very flattering to my story-telling talent.

“Ay, that is all, and enough too. Did I not tell you the story was like the old maple?”

“But, Fanny, it is no story at all. You have not said a word about the wedding; we do not even know they were married.”

“O, if you wish to hear about a wedding, take up the newspaper yonder. There is an account of the Empress Eugenie’s. These romances in white satin are wearisomely alike. But I will add, that some four years ago I visited Nell at her pleasant home on the banks of the Quinebaug. I found them both unchanged in heart; but she had really grown beautiful. Her face had gained in tone and expression; her eyes beamed with light that seemed to flow from a

heart brimming with untold happiness, and her voice was, as ever, 'the sweetest midst the cadences of girls.'

"We sat in the parlor, calling up old times. As I looked from the open window, I saw that one of the pillars of the piazza was wreathed with ivy, and near by, under the shade of a rose-bush, grew a large bunch of sage.

" 'So you really planted them, Nelly! — the sage and ivy I mean,' I said, pointing toward them.

" 'To be sure she did,' replied Harry, laughing; 'and they thrive well. Come and see the fruit, Fanny.'

"He drew us both into the next room, and, putting aside a muslin curtain, pointed to a beautiful babe that lay asleep in its cradle.

"The young mother stooped to kiss it, and as she raised her head their eyes met. Ah! that glance, so full of unspeakable happiness! I involuntarily repeated those words of the disciple of wisdom: 'A babe in the house is a well-spring of happiness, a messenger of peace and love, a link between angels and men.' "

XII.

LILIAN LOVIS.

"SIXTY-ONE—two—three. It must be old Aunt Saunders," I observed, as the tolling of the old church bell fell upon my ear. For the first time in my life I listened to its mournful tones with a feeling of relief, if not pleasure. Not that I have so far outgrown humanity as to be able to look Death in the face without fear,—for I have still a childish dread of *shadows*,—but I knew that a lamp, whose flame had been long dimmed by the unwholesome vapors of earth, had been relit in heaven—that a harp, whose chords had been too tensely drawn while here to give forth sweet music, had again caught up the hymn of life in that blessed land where all beautiful things

"Keep the high promise of their earlier day."

I put on my bonnet, and in a few moments stood in the chamber of death. I have ever had a proclivity to antiquarianism, reader; but my researches have been rather in the soul-world than in the world of old ruins or Roman antiquities. I love to take some old, care-worn, world-worn face, and recast it in the mould of youth—to strip from it, one by one, those mummy-like envelopes which time, education and custom have wrapped around it, until, Galatea-like, it stands before me, glowing with youth, hope and beauty. But Aunt Saunders' face (she was the "village aunt," reader); had ever been to me most tantalizing. Occasionally I fancied that I could detect a gleam of light in her sunken eyes, that betokened something like human interest; but, like a spot

of untarnished gilding on some old, illuminated manuscript, it only served to show more plainly the dilapidated condition of the rest.

How could I dream that she had ever been young and fair? that those faded, sunken eyes had ever flashed back the sunlight, or mirrored in their depths an image of love and hope? that those shrivelled lids had ever drooped, in very bashfulness, beneath the gaze of loving eyes which were earnestly striving to read that tale which no man reads unmoved? By what magic could I smooth out the unnumbered wrinkles that circled round her mouth, and make it once more the gate of love and mirth, of song and ringing laughter?

Death revealed to me far more than life. He did not enter that solitary chamber alone. The angel of mercy had stood by the pillow of the dying one, and retouched those faded lineaments with something like the freshness of early life.

Then I learned (and could well credit the tale) how, in early girlhood, she had been, for three blessed years, the cherished flower of young Henry Gresham's heart — his Lily, as he fondly called her, filling his pathway with fragrance and beauty. Those sunken eyes had returned light for light, those shrivelled lips, love for love, and the young man forgot his proud mother and worldly-wise father, while he sat by her side and received both at her hands. Lilian Lovis had nothing to recommend her to the wealthy Greshams but her sweet face and guileless heart. These were priceless in the eyes of young Harry; but, unfortunately, the old people thought differently. They saw no beauty save through the yellow atmosphere of gold, no worth save such as could be found between the leaves of mouldy family records. Their children had been trained to implicit obedience, and they did not fail to represent to Harry their disapproval of his taste in such a way as to leave him no choice between love and what they called — and, alas! he thought — duty.

They succeeded in convincing his intellect, but not his

heart, for *there* the fragrance of his Lily lingered long after the daughter of rich Jacob Greene called him husband. And once or twice, during the first years of his marriage (we say it in a whisper, reader), he was so *very* foolish as to entertain something like the thought that Manning Farm and Long Acres were a poor exchange for the pure soul and loving tones of Lilian Lovis. But he was prudent as well as dutiful, and, in a few years, succeeded, to all appearance, in burying the image of his youth, together with that of his meek-eyed Lily, under a load of speculations that finally made him one of the richest men in the county.

For some time after Harry Gresham's marriage, Lilian Lovis' eyes had a dreamy look, and, not unfrequently, a bright drop gathered on the long lashes, and fell silently down her cheek. Still she did not repine. She had been too deeply schooled in the "meek lessons of humanity" to do that. Harry had obeyed his parents—fulfilled the commandment—and, with her New England education, she could not blame him. With an earnest effort to gather the sunshine into her heart once more, she lifted her head, and sought strength and comfort in the strict performance of such duties as fell to her lot.

Lily was still young when her mother died, but she had a high character for faithfulness and honesty, and this drew upon her the attention of old, rich, rheumatic John Saunders. He wanted a wife, or, rather, a nurse and housekeeper under that name, and his choice fell upon Lily.

She hesitated—but friends whispered, nay shouted, maxims of prudence and worldly wisdom in her ears, mingled with hints of dependence, until, bewildered, confused, with a shudder which she prayed Heaven to forgive, as the movement of a rebellious heart, she laid her hand in the bony one that reached out to grasp hers, and gave him the name of husband.

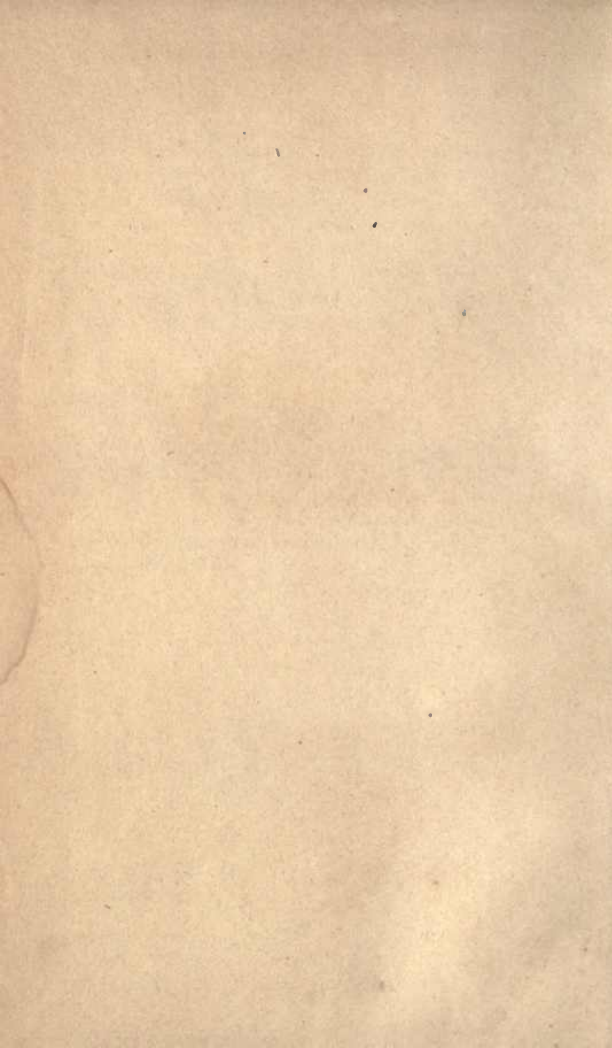
For many long months her new home seemed dark and

empty, — but “something the heart must have to cherish,” and, as her husband grew more and more feeble, pity took the place of love, and led her to think of him with a feeling nearly akin to that which a mother feels towards a peevish, suffering child. Irritable and impatient, he could not bear to trust her from his sight ; and the freshness and fragrance of Lily soon faded in the close atmosphere of that sick-chamber, while the flower-dust of the heart was daily brushed away by some new exaction on the part of the querulous invalid. Yet he loved her, as well as he was capable of loving anything aside from himself, and thought he made ample compensation for all her care and patience by leaving her a competence in his will. So thought her friends when, after a lingering struggle of many years, he at length yielded to death. They spoke much of his generosity, and Lilian assented to their remarks without comprehending them.

After so many years of seclusion their voices annoyed her. She had not loved old John Saunders as a wife — she could not ; but his pale, wrinkled face, peering over the back of his arm-chair, watching her every movement — his sharp, querulous tones, calling her name until he obtained a reply, were it a thousand times, had, by the mere force of habit, become a part of her daily life, of herself — and now, in her utter isolation, she often turned from the condolence that sounded so much like congratulation, towards that old arm-chair, almost expecting, and half wishing, to hear again his sharp-toned “Lilian.” Her long confinement had unfitted her for the rush and stir of life ; but she gradually grew to be an oracle at births and deaths — a rare compounder of embrocations and syrups, and nurse to the whole town. To these she united another occupation — that of shroud-maker ; and many a time have I watched her attenuated fingers pressing the long needle through the starched muslin, and thought, if the white folds were only gathered around her, the illusion would be complete. Life and death, a funeral or a birth, seemed

alike to her; and, to me, she was a being without human sympathies. But I was mistaken. One chord in the harp of life still vibrated to the music of earth. On the day before her death the rich Judge Gresham, while presiding at a meeting of the directors of the —— railroad, was taken with a fit of apoplexy. He lived but a few hours, but, during that time, succeeded in making a few orders and requests understood. One was, that Lilian Saunders should make his shroud. The person who conveyed the order to Aunt Saunders did not note the trembling of her hands, or the sudden gleam of her eye, as he mentioned the death of her early lover and his request. For some seconds after the door closed upon the messenger, she stood gazing at the snowy folds of cambric in her hand, as in a dream. "Tis more than forty years since," she murmured, as she mechanically laid the cambric on her pillow, and pressed her cheek against the white folds. For a few moments, perchance hours, she was again his Lily, and then — Death and Mercy took her home.







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